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FAMOUS BATTLES
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IN
INDIAN HISTORY**

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BY

T. G. SUBRAHMANYAM, M.A., LT.

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PREFACE

This book has been specially designed as a help to the students of the B.A. classes and High School teachers, who have had no opportunity, time or access to go through the original sources. The book is also intended to bridge the gap between text-books and original sources.

Moreover, a knowledge of chief national events in all their bearings, promotes a national pride, which does not stop short of national freedom ; and this book is but a step to that knowledge.

Here, I take the opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to the various authors, from whom I had taken copious quotations in general and specially to Fr. Heras, for quotations from his "Aravīdu Dynasty".

To Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastriar, I am indebted in more ways than one. His book on the "Colas" instilled in me a desire to write and also set me upon the theme of this book, the *Famous Battles in Indian History* ; his approval enabled this book

to see the light of the day; his lectures and personal suggestions gave the finishing touches to this book. And I once more gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to him.

My friend, Sri V. Doraiswami has laid me under a deep debt of obligation to him, by introducing me to the publishers, by going through the manuscript and correcting the proofs for me. My thanks are due to him for the interest he evinced in seeing this book through the press.

Lastly, my thanks are due to the publishers, Messrs G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, and specially to Rao Bahadur G. A. Natesan for readily undertaking to publish the book in these difficult times and also for the nice printing and get-up of the book.

AUTHOR

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

This book was specially designed by the author for university students—particularly those who had no access to the original sources, which are daily getting more and more difficult to come by. It is for this reason also that Mr. Subrahmanyam's condensed history forms such excellent reading material for Army Promotion Examination: without going into very great detail or referring to obscure and unavoidable tools, it includes the salient points in the history of ten decisive military engagements that changed the course of Indian History.

The Battle of the Hydaspes, with which the book opens, is an epochal event in the ancient history of India, as it was fought to prevent the onrush of the Greeks under Alexander by the valiant Porus, King of the Pauravas. Each of the successive battles described in these pages marks a turning point in the history of India—in the North as well as in the South. Thus, the Battle of Venni marks the beginning of the connected history of South India; the

Battle of Vellur completes the story of the conquest and annexation of the Pandyan territory by the Cholas : The Arab conquest of Sind, the Turkish conquest of Afghanistan, the Afghan conquest of Northern India, the Moghul conquest of India by the First Battle of Panipat, the downfall of the Hindu Imperial Rajput power after the Battle of Kanwa, and the Battle of Talikota which sealed the fate of Vijayanagar and paved the way for Muslim expansion into Southern India—these are all events of momentous significance in the pageant of Indian History.

Text books on the subject are brief and meagre in their matter-of-fact presentation, and do not always satisfy the natural curiosity of the reader to obtain a more thorough knowledge of these important episodes in Indian History. At the other extreme, more ponderous treatises embodying the researches of scholars are far too erudite for laymen's tastes. This unpretentious book is a *via media* between the too-brief text-book and the too-scholarly work of the historian. As such it will serve a useful purpose, both for the military student and also for the lay reader.

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THE BATTLE OF HYDASPES

The battle of Hydaspes, ever memorable as an epoch-making event in the history of Ancient India, was fought to prevent the onrush of the Greeks under Alexander into India, by the valiant Porus, king of the Pauravas, in July 326 B.C.

The Hydaspes, now known as the Jhelum, is one of the five rivers of the Punjab. The Sanskrit name for this river is Vitasta, which means 'widespread'. The natives of Kashmir call this river Bidesta, which is but a slightly altered form of the Sanskrit name Vitasta. Ptolemy, in his geography, calls this river Bidaspes, a form nearer the original than Hydaspes. The river is mentioned in the Rig Veda. This river, along with four others, the Cheenab, the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej, forms the Punjanad of the Punjab. The five rivers flowing side by side are referred to as Punjanad, and uniting together as a

single river, they meet the Indus at Mithankot, about 490 miles from the sea. The Hydaspes is separated from the Indus by a stretch of 160 miles.

At the time of Alexander's invasion, the land between the Indus and Hydaspes, *i.e.*, the present Sind Sagar Doab, was occupied by the powerful tribes, the Taxilas and the Abhisares. Between the Indus and the Hydaspes was Taxila, a large city governed by good laws writes Strabo. The kingdom of Taxila formed the eastern part of the old kingdom of Gandhara. It was situated on a level where the hills sank into the plains and the soil was extremely fertile from the number of spring and water courses. Taxila, which in Ptolemy's geography appears as Taxila, represents either the Sanskrit 'Taksha-Sila', *i.e.*, hewn stone or more probably 'Takshaka-Sila', *i.e.*, the rock of Taksha, the great Naga King. Cunningham identifies the ruins of a fortified city scattered over a wide space near the rock-seated village Shah-Deri, Punjab, as Taxila. The ruins lie about eight miles south-east of Hassan Abdal and thirty miles west from the famous tope Manikyala and twenty-four miles north-west of Rawalpindi. In B.C. 327, the ruler of this kingdom was known as Taxilas. He was succeeded by his son Ambhi, the Omphis of the Greek writers. Ambhi was afraid of his powerful neighbours, the

Pauravas and the Abhisaras.

The kingdom of the Abhisaras, a powerful tribe, lay among the mountains above the Taxila country. At the time of Alexander's invasion, the Abhisaras, allying themselves with the Pauravas, threatened the very existence of the kingdom of Taxila. It was the fear of these two tribes that drove Ambhi of Taxila to seek the protection of Alexander. When Alexander, camping at Kabul, demanded submission, Ambhi readily obeyed the summons and allied himself with the invader. As Rapson observes, 'It was the hand of an Indian prince which unbarred the door to the invader'. Ambhi met Alexander at Ohind, sixteen miles above Attock and invited him to his capital.

Alexander, king of Macedon, surnamed the Great, was born at Pella, in the year 356 B.C., and his father was Philip II of Macedon, whose fame in Greek history is second only to that of his son. His mother Olympia belonged to the royal race of Eperes, which claimed descent from Achilles, the Greek hero of the *Iliad*. Alexander was trained by Leonidas, his mother's kinsman, on the lines of Spartan discipline—hard exercise and simple fare. He next came under the influence of Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher. He had his military training under his father, Philip, who had then become famous throughout the Greek world.

Alexander, under the able tutelage of his father, became a master of military technique, and in the battle of Chaeronea, won for himself a position and name for bravery.

On the assassination of his father, Alexander ascended the throne of Macedon. At the time of his accession, he was 21 years of age and was beset with many difficulties. He, however, soon overcame them by his courage and firmness, and made himself master of Macedon and the army. His success in quelling his opponents fired his ambition for a career of conquest. He accordingly made preparations for his glorious and successful march into the kingdom of Persia.

Fully equipped, Alexander started from his native city, leaving his uncle Antipater, as his regent in the capital. Marching into Persia, he defeated Darius, the last Persian monarch of his dynasty, and having annexed his country, led his troops into India.

India had been a part of the empire of Darius and Alexander's invasion was only the necessary and inevitable completion of his conquest of that empire. In the course of his march, Alexander met at Bactria, a chief of Gandhara, Sasi Gupta by name, and was by him assured of the aid of Taxila, who was being sore pressed by his powerful neighbour, Porus. Later, arriving at Kabul Alexander

summoned the king of Taxila to do him homage. The Indian king met Alexander and saw the army at Kabul arrayed to invade India and estimated it at 25,000 to 35,000. Alexander, assured of help, divided his army, sent one division in advance with orders to march to the Indus and with the other marched against the mountain tribes around the Kabul valley. Later, marching into India, he met his other division near the Indus and crossed the river at Ohind, sixteen miles above Attock. Then leading his army away from the Indus, he arrived at Taxila, 'a great and flourishing city, the greatest indeed of all the cities, which lay between the Indus and the Hydaspes.' Taxila, as Alexander found it, was very populous and possessed of incredible wealth. He was given the usual royal greetings by the king of Taxila and Alexander stayed at the city for a few days.

From Taxila Alexander sent messengers to Porus demanding submission. The land between the Jhelum and the Cheenab, the present Jech-Doab, formed the kingdom of Porus and his tribe, the Pauravas. According to Strabo, the kingdom of the elder Porus 'was an extensive fertile district containing nearly 3,000 cities'. Didorus informs us that Porus had an army of more than 50,000 foot, about 3,000 horses, 1,000 chariots and 130

elephants. News was brought to Porus by his spies that Ambhi had allied himself with the invader and was planning to march against his kingdom. Porus, undaunted, prepared to meet the invader, strengthened his army and sent his son to guard the passages of the rivers and prevent a successful crossing of the river by the invading army. Hearing of the preparations made by the king of Pauravas to check him, Alexander left a garrison at Taxila, and immediately marched towards Hydaspes, with the determination to subjugate Porus. However before taking any hostile action, he sent an envoy named Cleochares to Porus demanding submission and tribute in person at the frontier of his kingdom. To this Porus gave the proud answer that he would indeed go to him, not as a suppliant, but at the head of an army ready for the fight. 'No other Indian king except Porus came to the frontier to repel the foreign foe, and to the eternal glory of this valiant monarch, be it recorded that he with two sons and an army 50,000 strong gallantly stood to oppose the mightiest and the greatest hero of antiquity'.

News came to Alexander that Porus with the whole of his army was on the other side of the river, resolved either to prevent him from making the passage or to attack him when crossing. Upon learning this, Alexander sent back Koinos to the

river Indus with orders to cut to pieces all the boats that had been constructed and made to float on the river Hydaspes, which was then in floods.

The site of Alexander's camp on the Hydaspes until he effected his passage, is, according to some, Jhelum, and according to others, Jalaipur. Smith opines it to be Jhelum, while Cunningham, and later Stein, argue for Jalaipur. Prof K. A. Nilakanta Sastri* accepting the contentions of Breloer, a German author, says that it has been conclusively proved beyond doubt that the place wherefrom Alexander took off was Jhelum, not Jalaipur.

Alexander in his Indian expedition advanced to the Hydaspes with intention to cross it, when Porus appeared with his army on the other side, determined to dispute the passage. Alexander then marched towards the head of the river and attempted to cross it there. Thither also Porus marched, and drew up his army on the opposite side. He then made the same effort lower down; there too Porus opposed him. These frequent appearances of intention to cross it, without ever making a real attempt to effect it, the Indians ridiculed, and concluding that he had no real design to pass the river, they became more negligent in attending to his movements, when Alexander by a rapid march,

*Madras University Lectures, 1942.

gaining the banks, effected his purpose on barges, boats and hides stuffed with straw, before the enemy had time to come up with him, who, deceived by so many faint attempts, yielded him at last an uninterrupted passage.' (Shepherd's translation of *Polyanos on the Stratagem of War*—II-IX-22 quoted by McCrindle—p. 345.)

A son of Porus with 2,000 men and 120 chariots, appeared on the scene and Alexander despatched against the prince the horse-archers and led the cavalry himself, believing that Porus was advancing against him. But news reached him that it was not the main army, and Alexander briskly charged them and routed the force. Among the slain was the brave son of Porus. Hearing of the death of his son and the successful passage of Alexander, Porus left his camp, leaving a small detachment to prevent the passage of the Greeks on the other side and marched his whole army towards the north-east of the Carri plain, to oppose Alexander on a favourable site. 'Porus drew up his army in order of battle, posting his elephants in the front line at intervals of at least 100 feet, so as to have his elephants ranged in front before the whole body of his infantry and so spread terror at all points among Alexander's cavalry'. The above quotation from Arrian amply proves the untenability of Smith's

description and plan of the battle. Here too Prof. Nilakanta Sastri accepts the arguments advanced by Breloer, the German author, as against Smith's arrangement of the battle array. Smith places the elephants in the centre, with infantry in the front and the rear and with cavalry on the sides. Contending that Porus would have relied upon his elephants to play the part of modern tanks, Prof. Nilakanta Sastri holds that Breloer's Plan of battle array where the elephants form a semicircular bastion of defence and offence, is more probable than that of Smith.

With his usual tactics of flank attack, Alexander threw the Indian tanks into confusion and disconcerted their plan of action. The elephants turning round increased the tumult and in the general rout caused more havoc to the Indians than to their enemies. The Indians fought bravely for eight hours, but were, in the end, defeated.

The two sons of Porus fell in the battle and also Spitakes, the chief of the Indians of that district, and the loss of Indians fell little short of 20,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry and all their chariots were broken to pieces.

When Porus, who had nobly discharged his duties throughout the battle, performing the part not only as a general but also as a gallant soldier, saw

the slaughter of his cavalry and some of his elephants lying dead and others wandering about sad and sullen without their drivers, while the greatest part of his infantry had been killed, he did not, after the manner of Darius, the Great King, abandon the field and show his men the first example of a flight, but on the contrary fought as long as he saw Indians maintaining the contest in a united body. But when he found himself wounded, he turned his elephant and began to retire. Alexander perceiving that he was a great man and valiant in fight, was anxious to save his life, and for this purpose sent to him first of all, Taxiles, the Indian. Taxiles, who was on horseback, approached as near the elephant which carried Porus, as seemed safe and entreated him, since it was no longer possible for him to flee, to stop his elephant and listen to the message he brought from Alexander. But Porus, on finding that the speaker was his old enemy Taxiles, turned round and prepared to smite him with his javelin, and he would have probably killed him, had not Taxiles, instantly put his horse to the gallop and got beyond the reach of Porus. But not even for this act did Alexander feel any resentment against Porus, but sent him messenger after messenger and last of all Meroes, an Indian, as he had learned that Porus and this Meroes were old friends. As soon as Porus

heard the message which Merces had brought just at a time when he was overpowered by thirst, he made his elephant halt, and dismounted. Then when he had taken a draught of water, he felt relieved, he requested Merces to conduct him without delay to Alexander' (McCrindle).

Alexander stepped in front of his line on horseback and beheld with admiration the handsome person and majestic stature of Porus, which somewhat exceeded five cubits. He saw too with wonder, that he did not seem to be broken and abased in spirit, but that he advanced to meet him as one brave man would meet another brave man after gallantly contending with another king in the defence of his kingdom. Then Alexander, who was the first to speak, requested Porus to say how he wished to be treated. Report goes that Porus said in reply 'Treat me, O ! Alexander ! as befits a king', and that Alexander being pleased with his answer replied, 'For mine own sake, O ! Porus ! thou shalt be so treated, but do thou, in thine own behalf, ask for whatever boon thou pleasest'. To which Porus replied, that in what he had asked, everything was included. Alexander, was more delighted than ever with this rejoinder, and not only appointed Porus to govern his own country, but added to his original territory another of still greater extent. Such then

was the result of the battle in which Alexander fought against Porus and the Indians of the other side of the Hydaspes (McCrindle, pp. 108-110).

A city of victory was built on the site of the battle, while yet another was planted on the opposite banks in memory of the famous Bucephalus, the king's stalwart old horse.

Arrian says, 'Indian bows though powerful were useless against the mobile Greek cavalry'

The Indian method of using a bow had a technique of its own. One end of the long bow had to rest on the ground, pressed by a toe before the bowman could discharge the arrow from it. This technique required a hard ground. Moreover though the bows were deadly in their action, yet it took time for manipulation. Hence is Arrian's statement "The Indian bows, though deadly, were no match against mobile Greek cavalry" It was rainy season, the ground was soft and miry and Porus' bowmen were unable to use their bows to good effect. This was one of the causes for the defeat of Porus.

In olden times the Indian kings rightly placed much reliance upon their elephants to crush their enemies, in the manner of modern tanks. But Porus' elephants got stuck into the miry ground and were unable to execute sharp movements. That the Greeks and their horses grew afraid of the big

elephants has often been stressed by Arrian. If the rains had not set in, and prevented the elephants from working havoc on the enemy's cavalry and footmen, the end of the battle would have been different, and Indian history would have had to tell quite a different tale. At any rate, Porus could have really defended himself and his kingdom and preserved his independence.

It can be safely asserted here that it was the fear engendered by the elephants in general on the minds of the Greeks and the spread of a similar idea of terror in the countries bordering India, that was responsible for the comparative absence of any foreign aggression into India for nearly ten centuries after Alexander.

Moreover, Porus was not helped by any other chief and he had to fight single-handed. The flank attack made by Alexander's cavalry was quite unexpected by the Indian king. Thus was the Indian king, Porus, vanquished, though personally he was more than a match to Alexander.

With the descent of Alexander the Great into the Punjab a new period may be said to have commenced. His Indian expedition was the first occasion for close conscious contact between the two countries; the conqueror, it is true, subdued no more than a mere corner of India and that only for a time,

but that Hellenic culture to the diffusion of which Alexander devoted his attention, as great as that bestowed by him on his material conquest, long survived his transitory empire in Asia and even in India made its presence felt in many different directions. . . Not only a few motifs of Hindu architecture and sculpture and carving and such like arts adhered too closely at their commencement to the Grecian models but Astronomy too—at least its scientific phase—was based somewhat on Grecian works, by which a great many Greek expressions have found their way into Indian astronomy’.

To exaggerate the Hellenistic influence of Alexander’s invasion has been the tendency of great many European scholars, while to minimise the influence of Greek art on India and to repudiate with vigour the suggestion that Indian art owed anything to the West has been of late the rule with some of our own historians. ‘The vigorous rule of the Mauryan monarchs, which saw the beginning of a great Indian renaissance, was indirectly the result of Alexander’s invasion’, writes Mr. Sen in his book, *Hellenism in Ancient India*. To say that the vigorous rule of the Mauryan administration was the outcome of Alexander’s invasion, however indirectly is to repudiate the capacity of the Mauryan monarchs. The Mauryan monarchs just then wresting power from

the Nandas, had to be vigorous and powerful in their policy and administration in their own interest. On the other hand, it was the vigorous Mauryan rule that led to a close and conscious contact between the two cultures, for the Mauryan monarch Chandragupta, not only conquered Seleukos Nikator, the great Viceroy, but married his daughter and allowed Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleukos, to reside in his court.

It can be asserted that one marked effect of the invasion was the rise of a strong monarchy, with imperial ideas in India in the place of small republican States. The easy subjugation of the small States by Alexander led to the realisation of the need for a strong monarch in the country and this indirectly helped the rise of the Mauryan power and empire.

‘Though his (Alexander’s) direct influence vanished from India within a generation and her literature does not know him, he affected Indian History for centuries for Chandragupta saw him and deduced the possibility of realising in actual fact, the conception handed down from Vedic times, of a comprehensive monarchy in India, hence Alexander indirectly created Asoka’s empire and enabled the spread of Buddhism” (*Cambridge Ancient History of India*)

2

THE BATTLE OF VENNI OR The Rise of the Cholas

The battle of Venni marks the beginning of a connected history of South India, and its importance can hardly be over-estimated. The traditional account of the Cholas begins with the battle of Venni, between Karikala Chola and the Chera and Pandyan kings.

The beginnings of the history of South India or more aptly the Tamil-Akam, lie still enveloped in a mist and historians have to fall back upon the Tamil literature of the Sangam age for a reconstruction of South Indian history. "The sangam literature is the oldest native source that supplies relevant material for the construction of a reliable account of the times and is now freely acknowledged to be an

indispensable, and in some cases, the only, source of historical information, in regard to early Tamil kingdoms." (*The Cera Kings* by K. G. Seshayyer.) The Sangam literature is classified under two broad divisions based on the subject-matter of the poems. Certain collections of lyrics relate to Puram, the Purapporul, concerned with the external relations of men such as war and politics. Certain other collections deal purely with Akam, embracing matters relating to states of mind, particularly of lovers.

The Sangam collections form the only source of information for the battle of Venni. Puram 65 and 66 of the Sangam collections, known as Purananuru, give us an account of the victory of Karikala Chola over the Cheras and the Pandyas at Venni. Akam 55 also gives an account of the battle. Porunaratruppadei-I, 143-148 and Agam 246 also give us an account of the battle. Venni is identified with the modern village of Koilvenni, 15 miles to the east of Tanjore. No definite date can be assigned to the battle, but it cannot be gainsaid that it was one of the earliest and most decisive battles of India.

Karikala Chola who was the victor, was the earliest Chola ruler known to tradition. He is called "Valavan" in Tamil literature and is said to have established the Chola power in South India. "The name Chola is given to a people as well as to a

dynasty of rulers. The Choles, as rulers, find mention in the second and thirteenth rock edicts of Asoka. Further references to the Cholas are also found in foreign literature such as Ptolemy's *Geography*, etc. The land between the two modern streams of the same name Vellar, formed the first Chola territory. The Cholas had their capital at Uraiyur, with Puhar or Kaveripattinam, as their alternative capital and chief sea-port. "A tangible historical account of the Cholas is to be had only from the Sangam age and its literature. Karikala Chola, the victor at Venni, is said to have established and developed Puhar as the chief port; Puhar was the great emporium of the East. Karikala Chola's grandfather's name appears to be Verpaharadakkar Perunarkili and his father's name was Uruvapparar Ilaiyon or Ilanjai Chenni. His father seems to have died at an early age and it is inferred that Karikala succeeded his grandfather as a boy. "Karikala Chola was ably assisted by his uncle Pidaithalayan and he contracted a marriage alliance with the Nangur Vel family." (Dr. S. K. Iyengar—*Ancient India*—p. 93) "Karikala Chola was a remarkable sovereign, who in many ways contributed to the permanent welfare of his subjects and has consequently been handed down to posterity as a beneficent monarch."

For a clear understanding of the significance of the battle of Venni, a knowledge of the Pandyas and the Cheras is essential. "South of the Chola kingdom lay that of the Pandyas which, extended from coast to coast, and embraced within its borders the modern districts of Madura and Tinnevely and the State of Travancore, taking also a part of Coimbatore and Cochin." (*Ancient India*, 61) The existence of the Pandya kingdom and the dynasty can be traced back to several centuries before the Christian era, as they are noticed in the Asokan inscriptions and the Mahawanso. The Pandyas had Mudura as their capital and Korka as their chief sea-port and the seat of a viceroyalty. The emblem of their house was the fish. The name of the Pandya King who sustained a defeat at the hands of Karikala Chola at the battle of Venni is not definitely known at present.

"North of the Pandyan kingdom lay the territory of the Cheras", a territory stretching right across the Palghat gap through Salem and Coimbatore. The Cheras had their capital at Vanji and their primary port was Thondi. All these three kingdoms, i.e., the Chera, the Chola and the Pandyan kingdoms, comprised the Tamil *Akam* of the Sangam age and the literature of this period mostly deals with the vicissitudes of these three dynasties.

The battle of Venni marks a turning point in Karikala Chola's career "for in this battle, he seems to have broken the back of a widespread confederacy formed against him. Besides the two crowned heads of the Chera and Pandya countries, eleven minor chieftains took their side in the campaign against him and shared the defeat at his hands." (*The Cholas* by Prof. K. A. N. Sastriar) The name of the Chera King, Cheraman Perum Cheralattan is mentioned in the colophon of the poem and a footnote gives another reading of the name as Parum Tolatan. Mr K. G. Sessa Aiyar (*Chera Kings*) identifies Adu Kodpattu Cheralattan, as the Chera King.

The battle of Venni established Karikala Chola firmly on the throne and secured for him some sort of hegemony among the three crowned monarchs of the day. After his victory Karikala seems to have cemented an alliance with the Chera King, by giving one of his daughters in marriage to the son of his vanquished rival. The name of the Chola princess is mentioned in *Siappadikaram* as Nachchovar.

The battle of Venni is of special interest, as *Puram 65* and *66* mention a peculiar practice among famous warriors in those early days. "We are told that the Chera King, while facing the foe in the battle, was pierced by a shaft which ran through his body, wounding also his back; and as a wound in

the back was regarded as a blot on heroism the Chera sat facing north and courted death by starvation. Starvation unto death as a penance has always been regarded in India, especially in ancient times, as an act of supreme fortitude and merit, and by this act the Chera wiped out the humiliation that the wound in the back implied. Akam 55 shows that the act evoked the sympathy and admiration of several, who also gave their lives along with him, and brilliant as his victory was, Karikala Chola seems to have felt that the heroism of the vanquished Chera's self-immolation surpassed his own as the victor of the day, and he had to be consoled with the assurance that the Chera King was not greater than he in glory." (*The Chera Kings* by K. G. Seshayyer.)

The bard Kalath-thalaiyar, who was with the Chera army at the engagement, mourns over the defeat of his king, and describes the gloom of his subjects, in the following verse (pavam 65) "The drum no longer thunders The lute has no music, The large milk-pans now lie empty Nor is honey gathered by the busy bees. No longer the farmers plough their fields No more is there any festive gatherings on the village lawns. Like the sun who sets behind the hills, when the full moon rises in all its splendour, our valiant king wounded on the back

by a rival monarch, has laid aside his sword in disgrace (and seeks death by starvation) alas ! How sad and cheerless are these days."

Another bard Venni-Kuyathiyar who was with the Chola King appears to have been also struck with the unlucky fate of the Chera and addressed Karikala as follows "Oh ; descendant of that warrior who sailing on the wide ocean compelled the winds to fill the sails of his ships. Oh ! Karikal Valava ! Lord of mighty elephants who hast displayed thy valour in this battle. Is not he, even nobler than thee, who ashamed of the wound on his back, starves without food, to gain a glorious death ? *

* *Tam. Is Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* by V. Kanakasabhai, pp. 66-67

THE BATTLE OF SRIPURAMBIYAM

Like the battle of Venni, the battle of Sripurambiyam is yet another landmark in the history of South India. Sripurambiyam, also known as Tirupurambiyam, is a place close to Kumbakonam. The Udayendiram plates furnish us with the information about this battle. These plates were issued in the 15th year (A.D. 921) of Madurai Konda Parakesavarman Parantaka I by Prithivipathi II of the Ganga dynasty, also known as the Hastimalla. The plates state that Prithivipathi I, the ally of the Paliava King Aparajita, defeated the Pandya King Varaguna and lost his life in the course of that fight having made his friend's title Aparajita significant. Thus it is evident that a battle took place between Varaguna Pandya on the one side and Ganga Prithivipathi and his over-lord on the other. Scholars fix the date of the battle somewhere about 880 A.D. which agree

with the facts so far known.

This battle marks the beginning of the decline of the Pandyas and also the revival of the Chola power, which had hitherto been kept under the control of the Pallavas of Kanchi. The significance of the battle is best understood by a study of the position of the Pandyas, the Gangas and the Pallavas, at the time of the battle.

At the time of the battle of Sripurambiyam, Varaguna Pandya also known as Maranjadayan was ruling over Madura. His date of accession to the throne has definitely been fixed up by scholars to be 862-83 A.D. We find in the Tamil literature mention of his aggressive rule and the spirit of his aggression is evidenced by an inscription of his reign found in the upper caves of Trichinopoly, in the Chola country.

"At this time the enterprising chieftains, known to history as Muttaraiyars, were in possession of a part of the fertile delta land in Tanjore, their inscriptions at Sendalai clearly describe them as ruling Tanjore also" (Prof. K. A. N. Sastriar—*The Cholas*). In Varaguna Pandya's time these chieftains threw in their lot with the Pandyas and consequently their neighbours, the Cholas, under Vijayalaya threw in their lot with the Pallavas. The Pallava with his help emboldened the Chola monarch to march

against the Tanjore Chiefs, captured Tanjore from the Muttarayar chieftains and annexed it to his dominions. And the Palava little suspected that "in employing his Chola subordinates he was, as the Indian saying has it, training the tiger cub to a taste of blood" (*Ibid.*) Nor did Vijayaaya dream that his victory would sow the seed of one of the most splendid empires known to Indian history

Varaguna Pandya of Madura little expected his subordinates the Muttaraiyars to be defeated by the Chola. And when he heard of the capture of Tanjore by Vijayaaya he led an expedition into the Chola country with the avowed object to chastise the Chola monarch and incidentally to extend his power and dominion. Varaguna attacked Idavai, stormed the fortress of Vembil, the modern Vembarur on the river Kaveri successfully. He then seems to have advanced beyond the Chola country and occupied a portion of Tondainadu, for, we have a grant issued by him from his camp at Arasur, on the river Pennar, in Tondainadu. His advance into Tondainadu brought him into conflict with the Gangas and their over-lords, the Pallavas, mistakenly called by some scholars Ganga-Pallavas, and considered as a separate dynasty.

"The Pallavas began as officers of the Satavahanas and ultimately rose to undisputed possession

of the territory of Kanchi, the right to which they strengthened by an alliance with the heiress of the southern block of the Satavahana territory, thus in a way becoming the titular descendants of the Satavahanas over the whole of the southern regions of Satavahana territory including in it their own new conquests, the territory of Tondaimandalam, dependent upon Kanchi". (*The Pallavas* by S. Gopalan, Introduction—p. 16.) In the course of their occupation of Kanchi and its surrounding districts, the pallavas seem to have driven further south, a tribe known to history as Kalwar or Kalawar, who in their turn brought about the disorder in the territory lying immediately to the south of the Nellore district extending southwards to the banks of Kaveri. It is this disturbance that is called the Karabhra interregnum in South Indian history. The Pandyas and the Pallavas soon put an end to the disturbances and in the act extended their power and position while the Cholas seem to have succumbed to it. The Pallavas taking advantage of the Karabhra disturbances brought the Cholas in the south under their subjection and so came into conflict with the Pandyas, who also attempted to extend their territory at the expense of the Cholas.

In the north the Gangas and the Kadambas accepted the Pallava overlordship which in turn

brought the Pallavas into conflict with the Chalukyas, who claimed supremacy over the Gangas. The constant hostilities of the Chalukyas on the northern frontier and the activity of the Pandyas in the south made the position of the Pallavas in the middle, one of extreme anxiety. "The maintenance of the Pallava power intact meant a 'Janus-faced' fight, south against the Pandyas and north against the Chalukyas" (*The Pallavas* - Introduction, p. 29.)

Thus it was in the later years the Pallavas, though nominally rulers over an extensive land, were really not powerful enough to check the dismemberment of their empire. Hence it was, the Pallavas allied themselves with their subordinates, the western Gangas who in turn, were compelled to continue their alliance because of the Chalukyan aggression on the northern frontier.

That the Pallavas were in a decline is clear from the fact that the Pandya King Varaguna was unopposed in his march into Tondaimandalam. Varaguna Pandya because of disturbance at home was unable to take advantage of his march into Tondaimandalam and had to return to his capital. Taking advantage of Varaguna's withdrawal, the Pallava King Aparajita got together his allies, chief among them being western Ganga Prithivipathi and Aditya Chola, and attacked Varaguna at Sripurambiyam. The battle

ended in a complete victory for the Paṇḍya King and his allies.

The battle stemmed the rising power of the Pandyas on the one hand and the decline of the Pallavas on the other. "The Pandyas never recovered from this staggering blow. And the Pallavas, though victory remained with them in the battle, owed it more to their allies than to their own strength. Thoroughly exhausted by incessant warfare on the two fronts they were themselves in no position to pursue the advantage gained. (Sastriar - *Colas*, p. 130.)

Apart from stemming the success of the Pandya and the decline of the Pallavas, the battle is important as marking the beginning of the revival of the Chola power under Aditya. "More lucky than the Ganga monarch, Aditya lived to share the spoils of the victory" and he was not slow to take advantage of the times. Freed for the moment from the dread of attack or annexation by the Pandya, he turned his attention to strengthen his position and eventually to oust the Pallava Aparajita from his throne and territory.

4

THE BATTLE OF VELLUR

OR

The Conquest and Annexation of the Pandya Territory by the Cholas

The battle of Sr.purambiyam stemmed the power of the Pandyas and the battle of Vellur altogether extinguished their power. We have a clear account of the battle of Vellur in the Mahawanso. Moreover two inscriptions of the 12th year of Parantaka make casual references to the battle. The Udayendiram plates issued by Prithvipathi II, Hasthimalla of the Ganga dynasty in the 15th year (A. D. 921) of Madurakonda Parakesari Varman Parantaka Chola I also refer to the battle. Parantaka I was the son and successor of Aditya Chola I who took part in the battle of Sr.purambiyam. Parantaka ascended the throne in the year 907 A.D. and he followed up

his father's victories by putting an end to the Pandyan independence and extending his empire up to Kanya Kumari in the south.

Soon after his accession Parantaka invaded the Pandya country and capturing Madura, took the title of "Madurai Kondan." The Pandya King, Rajasimha, was not strong enough to check Parantaka's progress and so sought the aid of the Ceylonese ruler. Rajasimha sent messengers after messengers to the Ceylonese ruler. The Mahawanso says, "While thus the sovereign of Lanka (Kassappa V - 913 - 23) held sway in justice, the Pandya King was vanquished in the battle by the Chola King. To gain military aid, he sent numerous gifts. The king, the ruler of Lanka, took counsel with his officers, equipped military forces, appointed his Sakkasenapathi as leader of the troops and betook himself to the Mahathutta. Standing at the edge of the coast, he spoke of the triumph of the former kings and thus arousing their enthusiasm, he made his troops embark. With his army the Sakkasenapathi, there-upon, safely crossed the sea and reached the Pandya country. When the Pandya King saw the troops and him, he spake full of cheer, "I will join all Jambudwipa under one umbrella." The king took the two armies, but as he could not vanquish him "the king, of the Cola line set out once more

. with the purpose of fighting further" (*The Colas*—p. 144).

The battle described above relates to the battle of Vellur, where Parantaka I completely routed the combined Pandyan and Ceylonese armies. The Udayendiram plates referred to above, narrates an account of the battle thus. "Having slain in an instant at the head of a battle an immense army despatched by the Lord of Lanka, which teamed with brave soldiers (and) was interspersed with troops of elephants and horses he (Parantaka) bears in the world the title Sangrama Raghava (i.e., Rama in battle), which is full of meaning. When he defeated the Pandya (king) Rajasimha, two persons experienced the same fear at the same time; (Kubera) the lord of wealth on account of the death of his own friend (and) Vibhishana on account of the proximity (of the Chola dominions to Ceylon)" —S. I. I. II No. 76.

It is clear from the above statements that a great and decisive battle took place between Parantaka I and Rajasimha in which Parantaka was successful. "The victory of Parantaka at Veilur paved the way for the progressive conquest and annexation of the Pandya country" Moreover, the Pandya King fled to Ceylon leaving his ancient heritage to fall into the hands of his enemy. The

Mahawanso records of his flight as follows "At that time the Pandya King, through fear of the Chola (King), left his country, took ship and came to Mahathitta. The king had him brought to him, rejoiced greatly when he saw him, gave him an abundant income, and granted him a dwelling outside the town" The Thiruvengadam plates confirm the above facts in a verse, which is translated as follows: "Encircled by the fire of his (Parantaka) prowess, the Pandya, as if desirous of cooling the heat caused by it, quickly entered the sea (embarked to Ceylon), abandoning his royal state and the kingdom inherited from his ancestors."

5

THE BATTLE OF RAOR OR The Arab Conquest of Sind

The battle of Raor is important in Indian history as marking the Arab conquest of Sind and the beginning of the Muhammadan invasion which, eventually, resulted in the establishment of Muhammadan rule in India.

Many are the views regarding the identification of Raor referred to by the early Muhammadan historians. Haig places Raor in "Lower Sind", 80 miles from Brahmanabad and about 70 miles to the south east of Haderabad. Raverty locates Raor within ten miles of Brahmanabad. The identifications referred to above do not agree with facts disclosed by the Muhammadan historians. Professor R. C. Majumdar in his book "The Arab Invasion of

Sind" conclusively identifies Raor, with the modern town of Rohri on the western bank of Indus, important even in the present day as commanding the railway bridge which connects the island of Bukkar in the midstream and Sukkur on the right bank of the Indus. The battle of Raor took place between Muhammad-ibn-Kasim, representing the Muhammadan Caliphate, and Dahir, ruler of Sind.

The chief sources for the reconstruction of an account of the Arab raids into Sind are (a) *Kitab Fatah-ul-Bulden*, written by Al Baladhuri and (b) the *Cachnama*, a Persian translation of an old Arabic history of the conquest of Sind by the Arabs, translated about 1216 A.D. The *Cachnama* gives a detailed account of the conquest of Sind by the Arabs.

Like the nose of the alligator, Sind is the most vulnerable part of India, being exposed to foreign attack. The back of the country is covered by the Himalayan chain and is therefore like the back of an alligator, impossible to assail. The head of the country and its forehead too are protected by the Hindukush and the Sulaman ranges and are therefore practically unassailable. It is lower down, where the river Indus falls into the sea that there is no natural obstacle in the path of a foreign invader. The nose of India is doubtless approachable

through a sandy desert country without much water, but to those who are accustomed to traverse deserts on camels and mules, Sind is easily accessible and hence, it is, that it has frequently fallen a prey to foreign invaders in the history of Ancient India."* The two other States forming North-Western Frontier of India, higher up Sind were known as Zabul and Kabul, more precisely Zabulistan and Kabulistan. The Arab armies tried in vain to expand into Kabulistan and Zabulistan and being unsuccessful in that direction turned their armies against Sind through the Makran coast.

At the time of the Arab invasion Raja Dahir, son of Cach, was the ruler of Sind. He had his capital at Alor. The modern town of Rohri stands close by the ruins of Alor, on the banks of Sikkim, which the native historians called Mihram.

Raja Dahir was in possession of Multan and all Sind with perhaps the adjoining plains of the Indus, as far as the mountains of Kalabagh and also to those of Kaman, on the west. The Rajput feudal system was then prevalent in Sind and the territory was portioned among Dahir's relatives.

The immediate cause of the Arab attack on Sind, which led to a permanent conquest later on, was

* "*History of Mediaeval Hindu India*" by C. V. Vaidya, Vol. I, p. 169

the uncalled for attack on the Arab ship near the mouth of the Indus at Debal by the pirates. The ruler of Ceylon had despatched eight vessels filled with presents and envoys to secure the goodwill of Hajaj and the Caliph. These ships were plundered by the pirates at Debal. Debal or Diwal was a port on the Indus in the territory of Dahir. The identification of Debal had been a moot point with the historians. "It is strange that the site of a port, once so noted as Debal, should now be left to vague conjecture", says the historian. Native authorities seem decidedly in favour of identifying Debal with Thatta, while some historians make Debal lie between Thatta and Karachi. Elliot, however, definitely asserts, "But there can be no question that Debal was on or close to the sea coast, with which the distant inland city of Thatta is by no means correspondent. For my own part, I entertain little doubt that Karachi itself represents the site of Debal" * Debal was a port on the Indus in the territory of Dahir.

Hajaj nominally Governor of Iraq, but in fact, the ruler over all the country, demanded reparation from Dahir, ruler of Sind. Dahir declined compliance on the ground that he had no control over the pirates

*The History of India as told by its own historians

and declared his inability to restrain and repair the excess. Thereupon Haja earnestly sought the permission of the Caliph to attack Deba. and to exact due vengeance from Dahir and his subjects. Haja, promised to pay the Caliph double the cost of the expedition on a successful return and obtained permission to attack Dahir. He then sent Muhammad Kasim against Dahir.

Muhammad Kasim, known as Muhammad Bin Kasim Sakifi, then a youth of seventeen, was entrusted with the work of chastising Dahir. He was equipped with an army of 6,000 armed camel riders, 6,000 picked cavalry of Syria and Iraq and a baggage train of 3,000 Bactrian camels. In Makran he was joined by the Governor Muhammad Harun with other reinforcements. Moreover he had five catapults together with the necessary ammunition transported by sea to Debal. Besides these Arab troops, many Jats and Medes enlisted themselves under Muhammad Bin Kasim's banner.

With this army, he successfully besieged Debal and breaking the standard of the Hindus reduced the City of Deba. A son of Dahir who was in the city of Debal either as a master or as a ally retreated, on the reduction of the city, to Brahmanabad. Kasim then advanced on Nerun (now Haiderabad in Sind) and thence upon Saliwon and took the

fortress called Sal m. Thus far Kasim's progress met with little opposition. Here he was confronted with a powerful army under the command of the Raja's eldest son. After several indecisive encounters, Muhammad Kasim advanced to the neighbourhood of the capital Alor itself.

The *Cachnama* referred to as *Tarikh-i-Sind*, by Elphinstone, gives a vivid account of the battle and is here reproduced in part as translated by Elliot and Dowson (The History of India as told by its historians.)

Muhammad Kasim sends a Syrian ambassador and Maulana Islami to Dahir. When they came to Dahir, Maulana Islami of Debal did not bow his head or make any signs of reverence. Dahir recognised him and asked him why he failed in the usual respectful salutation and enquired if any one had thrown obstacles in his way. The Maulana of Debal replied, "When I was your subject it was right of me to observe the rule of obediences : but now, that I am converted and subject to the king of Islam, it cannot be expected that I should bow my head to an infidel." Dahir said, "If you were not an ambassador I would punish you with death." The Maulana replied "If you would kill me, it would be no great loss to the Arabs ; but they will avenge my death and exact the penalty from you."

Muhammad Kasim's route to Alor lay over the river and so he determined to cross the river but was apprehensive that the Rai Dahir might come to the banks of Mihran and oppose the transit. Hence to have an easy passage Muhammad Kasim secured the aid of Moka, son of Bisaya, who was a ruler of the island of Bait in the river and was subject to Dahir. It is the base desertion of the chief of the island of Bait that had been the root cause of the defeat of the ruler of Sind. The historian referred to sings ;

"Muhammad Kasim examines the ford Dahir hears Moka Bisaya had collected boats.

Dahir gives the government of Bait to Rasil."

"When Muhammad Kasim had collected his boats and began to join them together, Rasil with his officers and chiefs come to the opposite banks and prevent the completion of the bridge and the passage of the river. Muhammad Kasim thereupon ordered that the boats should all be brought to the western bank and there joined together to a distance equal to the estimated breadth of Mihran. He then placed his warriors fully armed upon the boats and let the head of the bridge which was full of archers to float down to the eastern bank. The archers drove off the infidels who were posted to guard the passage. So the Arabs passed over to the other

side and driving pegs into the earth made the bridge fast. The horse and the foot then crossed and giving battle put the infidels to flight and pursued them as far as the gates of Jhami."

"Dahir awakes and kills his chamberlain for bringing him news of the flight of the infidels and the victory of Islam." Rasil who had hitherto been subject to Dahir and opposing Kasim, deserts Dahir and joins Kasim's army. On his advice Muhammad Kasim advanced to Rewa and arrived at a place called Jewar or Jaipur. "Intelligence was brought to Rai Dahir that Muhammad Kasim with the Arab army had reached Jewar and when his minister Sisakar heard of it he said, 'Alas ! We are lost'. That place is called Jaipur or the town of victory and as the army had reached the place it will be successful and victorious" Dahir took offence at these words. The fire of indignation blazed out in his mind and he said with his anger, 'he has arrived at Hindbari for it is a place where his bones shall lie" Dahir left the place and with precipitation went into the fort of Rewar. Only a big lake separated the fort of Rewar from the Arab force. Muhammad encamped at Jitor on the stream of Dohrab. Rai Dahir leaving his dependents in the fort rushed forth to the open and fought the invaders. The author of *Cachnama* writes .

Muhammad Kasim Sikifi reads the Khutba.
Muhammad Kasim exhorts his soldiers.
The Arab army charges the infidels
Shuja Hanshi becomes a martyr
Muhammad Kasim charges in the name of God
The accursed Dahir is slain.

So narrates the Muslim writer of the *Cachnama*.
Dahir was slain at the fort of Rewar (Raor) at
sunset on Thursday the tenth of Ramzan in the year
93, i.e., June 712 A D

The causes that led to the fall of Sind are many.
The usurpation of Cach, the subsequent division of
the kingdom among Cach's sons and their wars
with the neighbouring kingdoms of Kashmir, Kanuj
and Ramal and lastly the existence of powerful
Buddhist monks who as political rulers of districts,
wielded great influence, worked inimically to the
Brahmanical State, the desertion of a great many
chiefs and the utter lack of military perspective
on the part of Dahir, all these contributed to the
downfall of the Hindu kingdom of Sind.

"The conquest of Sind should not be regarded
as indicating in a general way the superiority of the
Muslims (Arabs) over the Indians from a military
point of view" The success of the Muslims was
largely due to the lavish equipment of Muhammad
Bin-Kasim, to the encouragement given by Hajar and

lastly to the utter disunity and treachery of the chiefs of Sind and to the superstitious ideas prevalent at that time. King Dahir, though brave and courageous, lacked statesmanship and military skill. His failure to realise the importance of a command over the sea as essential for the success of an invading army marching across the Makran coast and to provide against the same was yet another cause of his failure. Most of the officers, being Buddhists, had an aversion to war and bloodshed and failed to cooperate effectively with Dahir. Dahir's failure to oppose the Muslims crossing the Sind river also contributed to the Muslim success. "To the inexplicable want of strategy on the part of Dahir and of the treachery of the Buddhists of the south, we must add the base betrayals of the chief officials and grandees of Sind to account for its ruler's ignominious end. All important chiefs and officials seem to have deserted his cause. This is partly accounted by the superstitious idea that according to the Hindu Sastras, the country was destined to fall into the hands of the Muhammadans and it was therefore useless to fight."

"The Arab conquest of Sind has been described as a mere episode in the history of India, which affected only a fringe of that vast country." Yet, due to the increase of trade and interchange of

ideas, Arab Sind formed a link between the East and the West. The conquest of Sind was the first and the last great achievement of the Arabs in India and three centuries of unremittent efforts on their part secured them only two petty states of Mansur and Multan. The Arabs occupied the Indus valley but their attempt at expansion further inland received a setback from the alert Indians. "When we remember their wonderful military success in other parts of Asia and Africa, the comparatively insignificant results they achieved in India certainly stand out as a marked contrast. The causes of this, however, do not lie in the religious and social peculiarities of India as old historians like Elphinstone vainly attempted to establish. The cause lies undoubtedly in the superior military strength and state organisation of the Indians as compared with most other nations of the time." (*The Arab Invasion of India* by Majumdar).

6

THE BATTLE OF LAGHMAN

OR

The Turkish Conquest of Afghanistan

The little known battle of Laghman is important in the annals of India, for it resulted in the establishment of Muhammadan rule on the frontiers of India and paved the way for the later Muhammadan invasions into India, especially, the immediate expeditions of Muhammad of Ghazni into India. Laghman is situated at the entrance to the valley which extends from Peshawar to Kabul. The valley is known after the city and has been identified with Lampaka of Sanskrit tradition. The district of Laghman lies north of Kabul river between the Kunar and Alinagar.

India in the tenth century included almost the whole of modern Afghanistan which was then divi-

ded into Kabulistan and Zabulistan. All the country east of the river Helmund was then called Hindustan. The Brahmin dynasty founded by Lalitha ruled over Kabul, while Zabul was ruled over by the Rajput or Kshatriya kings. The first Muslim invasion of the modern Afghanistan took place under a brave and ambitious brahmin by name Yakub-i-lais. He captured Herat in 301 Hijra and also overran Zabulistan and Kabulistan. He captured Kabul from the Brahmin kings of the place, who later withdrew farther east. Ever since his raid Kabul has remained in the possession of the Muhammadans. The Brahmin kings soon regained possession of Kabul and exacted a nominal submission from the Muhammadans of the place, but withdrew to Wahind on the west bank of the Indus and made it the seat of government. Yakub-i-lais is said to have laid the foundations of the city of Ghazni, which later on became the seat of a Turkish government.

Alptigin, at first Hajib or door-keeper to the king Abdu Malik, rose to prominence and established an independent principality at Gazni and was succeeded by a Turkish slave (his son-in-law), Sabuktigin. Having conquered Kandahar and Burst, the capital of Zabulistan, Sabuktigin attempted to extend his territories towards the east, where the kingdoms of India lay. His immediate neighbour on

the east was Jaipal, a Brahmin king of Hindustan, Kabul and Lahore. This king had his capital at Wahind or Udbhanda on the western bank of the Indus, in the vicinity of Peshawar and his kingdom comprised the upper valley of the Indus and most of the Punjab to the north of Sind extending westward to the mountains.

The *Tarikh-i Yamini* or *Kitab-ul-Yamini*, written by Al'Utbi, a contemporary of Amir Sabuktigin, gives a complete account of the Muhammadan occupation of Laghman. That Sabuktigin was the aggressor is evident from the following statement of Utbi, "He made frequent expeditions into Hind in the prosecutions of holy wars and there he conquered forts upon lofty hills and he captured cities in Hind which had upto that time been tenanted only by infidels and not trodden by camels and horses of Mussalmans" (*Elliot-II-p. 18*).

Jaipal, king of Lahore, marked the aggression, the slow and steady expansion of Muhammadan power and sought to stem the onrush of the Muhammadans. With this object he marched with all his troops into the valley of Laghman and became an aggressor in his turn, laying waste the territory of the Muhammadans. Utbi writes, "Then he (Jaipal) arose with his relations and the generals of his army and his vassals and hastened with his huge elephants to

wreak his vengeance upon Sabuktagin " Sabuktagin with his army set out from Ghazni and encountered Jaipal encamped in the valley of Laghman. Utbi says, "The armies fought several days successively against each other " He further relates that Sabuktagin believing in the superstitious ideas to come true had ordered a fountain to be defiled and "immediately upon his doing so, the horrors of the day of resurrection, rose up before the wicked infidels, and fire fell from heaven on them and hailstones accompanied by loud claps of thunder ; and a blast calculated to shake trees from their roots, blew upon them and thick and black vapours formed around them as that they could not see the road by which they could fly, and their food and water were filled with dust " The supernatural agency above recorded has only to be viewed as an exaggeration and accordingly should be discarded. That the Hindu army suffered most from the cold and snow and probably from hailstorms has to be accepted. Thus Jaipal, 'handicapped for want of pure water to drink and harassed by the intense cold of the inclement adventitious weather to which the Hindu soldiers of Northern India were not accustomed', had to sue for peace. At first the Muhammadans were not for peace, but being threatened by Jaipal that the Hindus, if compelled, will resist to

the last person, Sultan Amir and Muhammad agreed to offer peace terms. What exactly were the terms accepted by Jaipal is not clear and the Muhammadan historian Utbi mentions the cession of certain frontier fortresses to the Muhammadans as a condition for peace and goes on to relate that Jaipal after withdrawing his army and men from the Laghman valley, basely repudiated the terms. The charge of treachery levelled against Jaipal seems to be unfounded and appears to be unsustainable. The defeat of the Hindus, if at all it can be called a defeat, is only nominal and as such the surrender of frontier fortresses in Jaipal's territory would not have been agreed to by the Hindu ruler. It was by a threat of fighting to the last person, if compelled, that the Hindu Ruler had forced the Muhammadan Amir to offer terms, and Jaipal would not have consented to part with a fortress still less a frontier fortress. If it had been agreed to which is most doubtful, "Jaipal was not the man to treacherously break it as soon as he was safe within his own territory. The Brahmin kings of Kabul, like in fact Rajput kings of the whole of India at this time, were men of honour. Even Alberuni praises this high character; Muhammadan though he was, he was a truthful observer of the Hindus and their character; and he gives a very flattering account of the probity

and goodness of these kings of Kabul (*History of Mediaeval India*, Vol III, 27) Utbi himself relates in one place that Sabuktagin "considered it false as being opposed to the usual habits of Jaipal."

In another place Utbi remarks that Sabuktagin "sharpened the sword of intention in order to make an incursion upon his (Jaipal's) kingdom and cleanse it from impurity and from his (Jaipal's) rejection of Islam" The above remark clearly shows that in the first fight related above, Sabuktagin had not had the upper hand and that he after the truce and withdrawal of Jaipal and his army to Punjab attempted once more to establish his authority over Laghman valley This incursion into the valley is clearly described by Utbi. "So he (Sultan Sabuktagin) departed with his valiant servants and allies and relying upon the one God, and trusting in the fulfilment of the promise of victory, and he went on till he arrived with his troops in the country of Hind and he killed everyone, who on the part of Jaipal came to oppose him."

"The Amir marched out towards Laghman, which is a city celebrated for its strength and abounding in wealth. He conquered it and set fire to the places in its vicinity which were inhabited by the infidels and demolishing the idol temples, he established Islam in them. He marched and

captured other cities and killed the polluted wretches, destroying the idolatrous and gratifying the Mussalmans. On the completion of his conquest, he returned and promulgated an account of the victories obtained for Islam, and every one great and small, concurred in rejoicing over the result and thanking God."

It was this incursion and ruthless massacre of the Hindus of the Laghman valley that was responsible for another coalition of the Hindus under Jaipal and his march into the Laghman valley. Thus it was not the base repudiation of the treaty by Jaipal, that was responsible for the battle of Laghman, but the wanton aggression and massacre of the Hindus by Sabuktigin was the chief cause. Many of the Hindu chiefs, realising the necessity to stem the tide of the Muhammadan aggression sent aid to Jaipal of Lahore. Determined to fight the invaders, Jaipal, collecting his troops marched towards the Laghman valley to fight and establish his sway over the place. "When Amir Sabuktigin heard this intelligence, he again advanced to fight him. He urged the Mussalmans upon the uncircumcised infidels and they willingly obeyed his orders. He made bodies of 500 attack the enemy with their maces in hand and relieve each other when one party became tired, so that fresh men and

horses were constantly employed to the accursed enemy complained of the heat which arose from that iron oven. These detached parties made one united charge, in order to exterminate the numerous opponents".

The historian goes on describing, "The dust which arose prevented the eyes from seeing, swords could not be distinguished from spears men from elephants, the valiant from the coward. It was only when the dust was allayed, that it was found that the impure infidels were defeated and had fled, leaving behind, their property, utensils, army, provisions, elephants and horses."

The result was the utter discomfiture of the Hindus. The Raja was contented to offer the best things in his most distant provinces to the conqueror on condition that the hair on the crowns of their heads should not be shaven off. So the country in the neighbourhood was clear and open before Amir Sabuktigin."

As narrated above the Punjab lay before the invader. And the same he did not seize it. He took an immense booty and left Punjab to have its own sway. He, however, paved the way for his son Muhammad to seize Punjab and include it in his dominions.

THE BATTLE OF TARAIN

OR

"The Hastings of India"

OR

The Afghan Conquest of Northern India

The battle-field of Tarain is important in the history of India, as deciding the fate of Northern India in the contest for ascendancy between the Hindus as represented by the Rajputs and the Muhammadans under the Muhammad Ghorî. Two battles in two successive years, 1191 and 1192, were fought and in the first the Hindus were victorious and in the second the Muhammadans won the battle. It was the second battle that decided the fate of Hindu India and as such Tarain has become the Hastings of India.

The field of Tarain is now identified with Tirawari or Azimabad-i Tirawari, a village in the district

and Tahsi. of Karnal, Punjab and is situated in 29° 48' N and 76° 59' E. The village is 14 miles south of Thaneshwar and 84 miles north of Delhi. It is now reached by the Delhi Amballa-Ka ka Railway. It derives its modern name Azambad-i-Tilawari from Azam Shah, son of Aurangazib, and is important as Azam Shah's birth place.

The scene of the battle is said to have lain on the Sarusti, but Cunningham opined that the exact site was on the banks of Raukshi river four miles south of Tirawari and ten miles north of Karnal. The *Karnal Gazetteer* gives the latest information and states that the battle was fought at Nondina, a village in the Narwafi in the Nardak, twelve miles south of Thaneshwar and three miles from Taraon. Whatever be the place identified the battle will go down in history as the battle of Tarain, though the author of *Tabakat-i-Nasari*, the chief source for an account of the battle, gives the name as Narain.

An account of the Ghor dynasty and the Rajput kingdoms of Northern India furnishes a fitting historical background to the battle.

Ghor was a place north-west of Ghazni and was peopled by the Afghans who were originally Hindus but later became converts to Muhammadanism before and during the days of Muhammad Ghazni. The founder of the kingdom of Ghor was Allauddin

who fought with the last Mahmudi King of Ghazni and drove him out of the place. Allauddin sacked and burnt Ghazni for several days and so is known to history as Allauddin Jahansoz.

Muiz-ud-din Muhammad Bin Sam otherwise known as Muhammad Ghorī was a nephew of Allauddin and was appointed in conjunction with his brother Ghiyas-ud-din to the charge of a province in Ghor. Some historians call Muhammad Ghorī, "Shahabuddin Ghorī" or the flaming star of religion. Ghor conquered Multan in 1175 and took Peshawar in 1179. He then threatened the Mahmudi capital at Lahore. Sultan Khushru of Lahore, the last of the Mahmudi dynasty, sued for peace. In the year 1184 Ghor attacked Lahore again and took Sultan Khushru Malik prisoner. Thus the Punjab fell into the hands of the Afghans and the Turks of Ghazni, who were then the rulers of the Punjab, were driven out of their territory. The conquest of the Punjab, gave Muhammad Ghorī a footing in India, wherefrom he could easily assail the Hindu kingdoms of the north. In his immediate neighbourhood was the kingdom of Ajmer and Delhi and his career of expansion brought him into conflict with Prithivi Raj Chauhan, ruler of Ajmer and Delhi. — the Rai Pithawa of the Muslim historians. Prithiviraja succeeded his father Someswara

to the throne of Ajmer and Delhi in the year 1177 and ruled up to 1192. He belonged to the famous Rajput clan the Chauhans (also known as the Chahamanas or the Chohans), who had their original seat of government in Southern Rajputana. His achievements are recorded by his protegee Chand in a Hindi epic known as *Prithiviraja Raso*. Another work, in Sanskrit the *Prithiviraja Vijaya Kavya*, also celebrates his exploits. The Raso states that his mother was a daughter of Anangpal of Delhi, while two other sources, the *Prithiviraja Vijaya Kavya* and *Hammirkavya* make her to be a Chedi princess by name Karpuradevi. Equally indefinite is the date and place of his birth, scholars holding different opinions. According to one he was born in 1149, while another states it to be 1158. One of his queens was Inohini, daughter of Jai Paramara of Abu. Princess Samyogita, daughter of Jaichand of Kanauj, loved him and was the youngest of his queens. The romantic love affair of Prithiviraja and Samyogita, who heedless of her father's views, elected to throw her garland of flowers, signifying her choice on an image which was supposed to represent Prithiviraja and was stationed at the gates as a mark of disrespect to the Chauhan prince, and her unhesitating action in following her lord of choice, when he appeared before her at the time,

and his flight with her to his strong fortress, all these have immortalised the name of Prithviraja. Hence it is he who has been styled as "the last Hindu chivalrous Emperor of India"

In his time three great kings contended with him for the imperial dignity as Chakravartin of Northern India. Bhima, ruler of Guzarat, Paramardi Deva of Bundelkhand and Jaichand of Kanuj, each in his own way endeavoured to become the Chakravartin of Northern India. In two successful wars, one against Guzarat in 1179 and another against Bundelkhand in 1182, Prithviraja established his fame throughout Northern India and boldly styled himself as the Emperor of Northern India. The bitterness aroused in the mind of Jaichandra by the romantic love affair between Prithviraja and Samyogita, gave place to hate and jealousy and in turn gave rise to a deadly feud between the two Rajput houses of Delhi and Kanuj. Jaichand, who had aspired for the imperial position, was however checked by Prithviraja and it is this discomfiture of Jaichand at the hands of Prithviraja, that was also responsible for the long feud between the two kingdoms, which led to such disastrous results later on.

Rasa of Chand, *Taj-ul-Masiri* of Nizam-ud-din and *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-us-Siraj, give us a complete, though a slightly exaggerated account of

the conflict. On *y Tabakat-i-Nasari* gives an account of the fight and defeat of Ghori at Tarain. The extract is here given from *Tabakat-i Nasari* as translated and given by Elliot (*the History of India as told by its own Historians* in Vol II, p. 295). "The first attack was made by Muhammad Ghori on the fort of Sirhind, which was taken and placed under a Muhammadan governor. Rai Pitheura came up against the fort and the Sultan faced him at Narain. All the Rajs of Hindustan were with the Rai Kohah. In the fight, the Sultan, seizing a lance attacked Govindrai of Delhi, who was riding an elephant, the Sultan being on horseback. The Sultan, who was the second Rustum and the lion of the age, drove his lance into the mouth of Govindrai and knocked down two of his teeth. The Rai, however, by his blow wounded severely one arm of his adversary. The Sultan reined back his horse and turned aside. As the Sultan began to totter on his horse, an intrepid young Afghan sprang upon the Sultan's horse and supported him and took the horse safely away. But the army thinking that the Sultan was killed, gave way and fled and thus was inflicted a severe defeat upon the Muhammadans." *The Raso* makes mention of the capture and release of the Sultan several times by Prithiviraj. This statement is no doubt an exaggeration, but it has

to be accepted that there must have been some truth behind it. That the Sultan was captured and allowed to return by Prithiviraj on a ransom of 30 elephants and 500 horses is not improbable. The fact that the Sultan was defeated on the occasion is admitted by both the sides.

The author of *Tabakat-i-Nasari* mentions that Prithiviraja was helped by other rajas and that a confederacy was formed to check the Muhammadan advance. It has to be pointed out here that Prithiviraj had no time to call such a confederacy and it has to be said that he fought the enemy single-handed and successfully defeated them.

The first battle of Tarain was a victory for the Hindus and it was the discomfiture suffered by the Muhammadans in this battle that led to the subsequent attack upon the Hindu kingdoms the very next year. Like the battle of Marathon in Greek history, the first battle of Tarain, in Indian History, was fraught with dire consequences.

It is indeed true that the battle of Tarain enhanced the reputation of Prithiviraja, who had, by his victory over the Chandelas, Gahadavals, and Chalukyas, already become the acknowledged Emperor or Chakravartin of Northern India. But his victory at Tarain inflamed the jealousy of his erstwhile competitor for the imperial dignity, Jaschand

of Kanuj, who kept himself aloof in the second battle of Tarain and allowed the Chauhan Emperor to be defeated.

Taj-ul-Masiri suppresses all account of the first battle and begins with the second expedition of Muhammad Ghori on India. It attributes a religious motive to Ghori and gives no detail about the conflict but merely states the Muhammadan army was victorious.

Minhaj-us-Siraj in his book *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* states that 'Rai Pithaura alighted from his elephant, mounted a horse and galloped off, but he was captured near Sisruti and sent to hel.' History has yet to solve the mystery surrounding the fate of Rai Pithaura, who had become the hero of many a ballad of this country, the king Arthur of India.

The causes for the failure of the Hindus and the success of the Muhammadan hordes are many, chief among them being the internecine struggle between the various Rajput rulers of Northern India. The strife between the Chauhans of Delhi and the Rathors of Kanuj has found expression in the ballads celebrating the famous Swayamvara of Samyukta, daughter of Jajchand of Kanuj and the heroic exploits of Prithvi Raj of Chauhan dynasty. It was the signal failure of Jajchand of Kanuj to think in terms of Hindu India and co-operate

with Prithviraj that brought about the destruction of the Hindu Rajput dominance of India. The Hindu power suffered an irreparable blow and Hindu independence gave place to Muslim domination. The battle paved the way for the future Muhammadan occupation of India, which eventually was to culminate in the establishment of the Mughal dominion over all India. The Punjab fell before Muhammad, the Turkish ruler of Ghazni, Northern India fell before Shahabuddin, the Afghan king of Ghor.

8

THE FIRST BATTLE OF PANIPAT

OR

The Mughal Conquest of India

OR

The Transference of the Empire of
Hindustan from the Afghan to the
Chaghatai Turks

Panipat and its vicinity is important in Indian history as the field of many a battle fought for the dominance of India and particularly Northern India. From Delhi past Panipat to Karnal, Thaneshwar, stretches the great plain a dreary yellow waste. Everywhere a silent void, — as if the plain were intended by nature to be the battle-field of nations. If this were the intent with which the great plain of Delhi was created it has been fulfilled over and over again for over 3,000 years.

"It was upon this plain at Narain beyond Karnal that the last Rajput king of Delhi met Ghori and drove him back. Upon the same place a year later the Rajput host again awaited the invader and were defeated and mowed down by thousands. It was the deathblow to the Rajput dominion in Hindustan and never again has one of the first born races ruled Delhi."

"More than three hundred years later Zahiruddin Babar, the Mughal, broke the undisciplined host of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi Khan near Panipat and won Delhi for himself and his descendants. On the self-same spot his grandson, Akbar, overthrew the army of Bengal, that would have driven him and his Khans back to the northern hills, whence their father came. Nearly 200 years more and Nadir Shah, the Persian, was met on the plain by a feeble army and an unready king, who had not the spirit to die well, though they stood upon the ground made holy with the blood of heroes. Three and twenty years after his coming, the leader of the great Maharatta confederacy sent round the word, "the cup is full to the brim and cannot hold another drop" and "led his troops out of the fortified camp at Panipat, to be cut to pieces by the Afghans of Ahmad Shah Durani". Such has been the importance of the Carri plain in general and Panipat in particular. Three decisive

battles were fought at Panipat, all with far-reaching consequences.

The first battle of Panipat is important in the history of India as "it ushered in a new era and a new dynasty on the throne of Delhi." India on the eve of Babar's conquest did not represent the great Muhammadan empire of Firoz Shah but was an agglomeration of petty independent principalities, the rule of several disjointed provinces, owing no obedience to any one common and central authority. Delhi ceased to be the capital and mistress of India. Bahlo Lodi, an Afghan supplanting the Sayyid dynasty, founded the new Lodi dynasty and for a time succeeded in welding the crumbling Muhammadan Sultanate of Delhi. But when his successor, Sikandhar Khan Lodi, died in 1518, there was again confusion in the capital and though Ibrahim Lodi, son of Sikandhar Khan, was raised to the throne, he had to allow his Afghan nobles to gain the upper hand. This led to quarrel and disaffection among the nobles and Alla-uddin, uncle of the Sultan, fled to Babar and implored him to place him on the throne of Delhi, while another chief Dowlat Khan of Lahore principality, being sore pressed by Ibrahim's general sought the assistance of Babar promising in return to accept Babar's sovereignty over his territories. It is the feudal character of the nobility and

the Delhi government, that enabled the foreign foe to step in, at first as an ally, and later as conqueror.

Babar was not slow in seizing the opportunity thus afforded. Babar, son of Umar Shaikh, ruler of Farghana, was born at Kesh in the year 1483. At the age of 12, he succeeded to his father's dominions, but was, however, driven out of his own province and roamed as an adventurer. In October, 1504, he seized Kabul and "at once became king of Kabul and Ghazni, a kingdom more powerful than Farghana, which he had inherited and lost" (*Rulers of India Series - Babar*.) His stay at Kabul and the possibility of expanding his dominions across and outside the Laghman valley, induced him to make punitive expeditions into the Punjab. The expeditions were not fruitful. All the same, he did not despair. He writes in his memoirs, "Filled as I was by the ambition of conquest and broad sway one or two reverses could not make me sit down doing nothing." Thus it was though he had invaded India without effecting any real conquest, yet he did not give up his idea of conquest and expansion into the Punjab. On the other hand, he made preparations for an effective expansion. He foresaw the possibility of acquiring dominion in India and realising the importance of Kandahar as a base for an effective expansion into India, secured the stronghold and

territory between Ghazni and Khorassan in the years 1520-1522, and when the cal came from Alauddin and Daulat Khan in 1524, he was too well prepared to refuse the aid

On November 17, 1525, Babar left for Kabul on his fifth and final invasion of India. At Lahore he secured the submission of Daulat Khan, who had revolted against him and from thence marched to Sialkot. Here news reached him of the defeat of Alam Khan and his troops at the hands of Ibrahim and it was this news of the defeat of his adherents that was responsible for his resolve to fight Ibrahim Lodi and secure the throne of Delhi for himself. He left Sialkot and marched his troops towards Delhi to meet the Sultan's army. At Kagri he learnt that Sultan Ibrahim Lodi had ordered Hamid Khan Shekdar or Collector of Revenue of Hissar Feroz, to oppose him. As a counter-move Babar ordered his son Humayun to surprise the force of Hamid Khan. Accordingly Humayun, helped by Kwaja Khan, Sultan Muhammad Dildari, treasurer Waji and others, surprised Hamid Khan near Ambala on the 25th of February, 1526, and captured about eight elephants. The news of the success of Humayun reached Babar's camp on the 2nd of March and Humayun presented himself before Babar on the 5th of March 1526. As this was the first engage-

ment and the maiden success of Humayun, viewing it to be a good omen, Babar presented a dress of honour to Humayun and allotted to him the government of Hissar Firoz, which yielded a revenue of nearly a crore of rupees.

Babar next halted at Shahabad and from there sent scouts to reconnoitre the neighbourhood and to procure intelligence of Sultan Ibrahim's movement. Babar learnt from the scouts that an advance army under Daulat Lodi had been despatched against him by Sultan Ibrahim and so Babar sent his son-in-law Mahdi Kwaja, and Taimur Sultan along the Jumna to surprise them. Babar here records the flight of Ibrahim's advance army. He then improvised his defences by causing the carts to be fastened to each other with cowhides, so that they may form a pallisade, as it were, against enemy attacks. Then Babar took counsel of his Amirs and decided to take a stand near the town of Panipat. Babar relied mostly on his artillery, a new development in Indian warfare. His right wing rested on the town of Panipat. In front were the Turas and the artillery with matchlock men behind them. On the left he had entrenchments made and trees fixed in a line, with outlets here and there for a hundred men or more to sally out.

Babar writes: 'Many of the soldiers were in

great alarm. They were in two or three months' journey from their native land and were about to encounter a monarch, whose army was said to be 100,000 strong and his elephants 1,000. Trepidation and fear are always unseemly. Whatever Almighty God has decreed upon all eternity cannot be reversed. The emperor possessed the measure of his father and his grandfather, sufficient in current coin, to have enlisted 100,000 more soldiers, but he was miserly to the last degree and he had no experience in war. During several days that we spent at Panipat, a small party of my troops, advancing closely upon the Indian camp, discharged their arrows with impunity."

"On the 21st of April at the time of morning prayers, 1526, while it was yet twilight, the patrols reported that the enemy was approaching in battle array. We immediately braced in our armour and mounted for the combat. The right wing was led by Humayun, the left by Muhammad Zaman Mirza of Khorassan. The centre under my command was in two divisions, one headed by Chin Tarmur, the other by Khalifa. The van was under Gokultesh : Abdul Aziz, the master of horses, commanded the reserve. Beyond the right wing I stationed Walli Kazil, with a flanking party of Mughals, and a similar body on the left, with an order to make circuit and

fall upon the rear of the enemy. When the army of Ibrahim came in sight, it was bearing towards my right wing. therefore I detached Abdul Aziz to support Humayun. The enemy came on rapidly until the sight of our defences checked their speed. My flanking parties quickly fetched to compass to shoot arrows upon their rear and I ordered the right and left wings to charge them in front. The conflict was obstinate and I sent divisions to reinforce both Humayun and Taimur Mirza. Meanwhile Ustad Ali Kuli discharged his field pieces many times with good effect, and Mustafa Rumi, the commander on the left of the centre, did much execution with his artillery. My right, centre, left and flankers were all hotly engaged with the enemy at once. The troops of Ibrahim were entirely surrounded. They made a few spiritless charges on my right and left wings (not upon the centre because of the artillery, the Indians had no artillery). My soldiers pined them with arrows and drove them in upon their main body. They were thrown into such confusion that they could neither fight nor fly!" (*Babar's Memoirs* translated by Caldecot). "When the incitement to battle had come, the sun was spear high, till midday fighting had been in full force, noon passed, the foe was crushed in defeat, our friends rejoicing and gay. By God's mercy and kindness,

this difficult affair was made easy for us. In one half day, that armed mass was laid upon the earth. Five or six thousand men were killed in one place close to Ibrahim. Our estimate of the other dead lying all over the field was 15,000 to 16,000, but it came to be known later in Agra from the statement of Hindustanis that 40,000 or 50,000 may have died in the battle" (*Babar's Memoirs*).

Ibrahim's defect according to Babar was his lack of experience and failure to act promptly. Babar records, "In his hands was the treasure of two forbears. In Hindustan, when work such as this has to be done, it is customary to pay out money to hired retainers who are known as *baid*—Hindi. If it had occurred to Ibrahim to do this, he might have had another lakh or two of troops. God brought it right! Ibrahim could neither content his braves nor share out his treasure. How should he content his braves when he was ruled by avarice and had a craving insatiable to pile coin on coin? He was an unproved brave. He provided nothing for his military operations, he perfected nothing, nor stand, nor move nor fight." (*Babar's Memoirs*).

The battle of Panipat marks the end of the mediaeval age and ushers in the modern era in India. It may be taken as the turning point in the history of India, for it laid the foundation of that empire,

which in later years came to be respected at home and abroad.

It set a new dynasty on the throne of Delhi—the Mughals. But it did not give the founder, Babar a real dominance over the country

9

THE BATTLE OF KANWA

16th MARCH, 1527

OR

The Downfall of Hindu Imperial Rajput Power

The battle of Kanwa, which enabled Babar to successfully put an end to the rise of the Rajput power in Northern India, may be classed as one of the decisive battles of India. Kanwa variously spelt as Khania or Kanua is a village in Rupbas Tahsil of the State of Bharatpur, (Rajputana) and is close to the left bank of Bangana river and is about 13 miles south of Bharatpur city, 20 miles from Agra and 10 miles from Sikri. It was here that Babar gained a victory over Rana Sangram Singh of Mewar.

The victory of Panipat in 1526 secured Babar the throne and province of Delhi but gave him no real dominance over Northern India, for the Rajputs,

who had ever been threatening the Sultan of Delhi, were still powerful and aggressive in their attitude towards the new ruler of Delhi.

The Rajput leader was Rana Sangram Singh, commonly called Rana Sanga, the head of Mewar or Chittor State. The Rana was indeed worthy of his position. He had already been the hero of a hundred fights and has been rightly described "as the fragment of a warrior" lacking an eye and an arm, with eighty scars on his body, testifying his mighty deeds. He was a great warrior, and also a statesman, who looked ahead to the future to aid him in his ambitions. But unfortunately he was forestalled by Babar, who as an astute military leader, realised and recognised the importance of Agra and secured the same immediately after his victory at Panipat.

In his memoirs Babar reveals that "Rana Sanga of Mewar had sent an embassy to Kabul, with profession of friendship and engaged to march upon Agra, if I advanced upon Delhi, yet during the whole of the campaign he did not make a single movement" (Erskine). That the Rana had the idea of capturing Agra and making it the seat of an imperial Rajput power, cannot be gainsaid. His plan to synchronise his march against Agra with that of Babar's on Delhi, was well conceived and would have certainly ensured achievement of his

object to settle Rajput power in Northern India, if he had acted upon it. That he failed to do so is also significant. What it was that prevented him from seizing the opportunity cannot be definitely stated now at this distant date. The Rana seems to have counted upon the defeat of Babar, else it would be difficult to understand, that one, who had been a hero of many a battle, and who had been fighting the Sultan of Delhi with great success, should tacitly have allied himself with the invader to establish a new power at Delhi, so near, and so dangerous to his own existence. The Rana, intent upon his own career of aggression against the Sultanate of Delhi, failed to foresee the success of Babar. He expected the imperial forces at Agra to be withdrawn to meet the Mughal invader, Babar, and the city to fall an easy prey to him. He further seems to have calculated the city, once captured, could be successfully defended against any siege by the Sultan's army. That the Rana belittled the invading forces under Babar and expected the imperial army of the Sultan of Delhi to be victorious and become weakened cannot be gainsaid. It was this view that must have prompted the Rana to send an embassy to Kabul suggesting to Babar a march on Delhi and promising his march upon Agra at the same time.

Though Babar was at Sialkot, it was not then

decided that he should march upon Delhi and so the Rana was not sure when he was to march upon Agra. The sudden decision of Babar to give battle to Sultan Ibrahim and his rapid march towards Delhi, all in the course of a few days, and his victory over the Sultan's army, 'in the space of half a day' had all been unexpected by the Rana, and so upset the Rana's calculations. Further Babar, on the very same day he won his victory at Panipat, *i.e.*, on the 25th of April, 1526, despatched Humayun with an army to take possession of Agra, which he knew to be the objective of the Rana. The Rana had practically no time to work out his plans and hence his failure to strengthen his position in and around Agra and act up to his ideas.

Dismayed at the success of the invader, the Rana, forgetting for the moment his differences with the Sultanate of Delhi, allied himself with Hassan Khan Mewar and raised to the throne one of the sons of Sikander Lodi as Padshah Muhammad Shah, to succeed Ibrahim Lodi, who was killed in the battle of Panipat. The Rana then attacked and captured Khandin, a fortress in the Biana district, east of Ranthambor, held by Hassan Makon, who had several times sought the aid of Babar. Thus it was that the Rana came into conflict with Babar.

By this time Babar had seated himself firmly on

the throne of Delhi and was slowly establishing his rule over the chieftains in and around Agra. Many of the Hindustani chieftains submitted to him. He had sent his son Humayun against Jaunpur and was having hourly news in that country. News of the capture of Kandheri fortress and later the capture of Biana by the Rana reached Babar when he was at Agra. He therefore sent word to Humayun, who was then at Jaunpur. He wrote, "come quickly yourself. Rana Sangha, the Pagan is conveniently close, let us first think of him." To wean away Hassan Khan Mewati from joining the Rana and to conciliate him, Babar released Nahas Khan, son of Hassan Khan Mewati, and sent him to his father to negotiate a reconciliation. Hassan Khan, however, on hearing the news of the release of his son and before being joined by his son, left Alwar with his army and met the Rana at Tada (Bhim in Agra district).

Babar left Agra on the 11th of February, 1527, on his journey for a Jihad or holy war and dismounted in the open country to assemble troops. He left the camp of Agra on the 16th of February, 1527, Saturday and marched towards Sikri. On his way his army was reinforced by the Biana army under Mahdi Kwaqa. Babar sent out Abdul Aziz with 1,000 followers to watch the movement of the

Pagan army. Abdul Aziz moved out of Sikri but immediately after was discomfited and captured by the Rana's party. On receiving the news, Babar sent Kalifa Muhibib-i-Ali to retrieve the loss, but he too was put to rout and pursued by the Hindus, who stopped the pursuit only on seeing Alijang Jang's troops, sent by Babar to reinforce Mahub Ali's army. News came to Babar that the Hindu army was approaching, and Babar left his position at Sikri and marched and took up his stand near a lake close to the town. Here Babar had his carts chained up in "the Rumi way" to form a wall of defence and spent nearly 20 to 25 days in strengthening his defence in various ways. Lacking in carts to put all round the camp, he had tripods made and used them to stitch thick hides to give shelter to his army. Five hundred men from Kabul joined his ranks. Babar writes in his Memoirs the state of the feeling of his army "Owing to the Pagan rapid advance to the fighting work in Biana, and to the praise and land of the Pagans made by the Shah Mansur, Qusmair and the rest from Biana, people in the army showed signs of want of heart; on the top of all this came the defeat of Abdul Aziz". To strengthen his own mind and also to hearten his troops, he renounced wine on Monday the 15th of February, 1527. His proclamation issued the next

day giving an account of the renunciation shows Babar the man and is here reproduced in parts as translated by Beveridge.

"By reason of human frailty of the customs of the kings and of the great, al. of us from Shah to the Siphahi, in the best day of our youth have transgressed and done, what we ought not to have done. But the renunciation of wine, the greatest and most indispensable of renunciations, remained

On this occasion I received a secret inspiration Thereupon we set ourselves to extirpate the thing of wickedness and we earnestly knocked at the gates of repentance. The Guide of Help assisted us, according to the saying "Who ever knocks and re-knocks, to him it will be opened and an order was given that with the holy war there should begin the still greater war" Royal wine cups of gold and silver were dashed to pieces before the army. "By the blessing of this acceptable repentance, many of the countries, by virtue of the saying that men follow the religion of their kings embraced abstinence at the same assemblage, and entirely renounced the use of wine and up till now crowds of our subjects, hourly attain this auspicious happiness. I hope that in accordance with the saying, "He who incites to good deeds has the same reward, as he who does them," . . . "the benefit of

this reaction will react on the royal fortune and increase it day by day by victories". (Beveridge). "In short, we declared with sincerity that we would subjugate our passions and I engraved on the tablet of my heart," I turn unto thee with repentance and I am the first of the true believers." "And I made public the resolution to abstain from wine, which had been hidden in the treasury of my breast." The act of renunciation of wine, though it increased Babar's reputation and endorsed his purpose of holy war with sanctity, yet it did not influence that spirit of enthusiasm in the army that was necessary for a successful holy war Babar writes "Great and small had been made very anxious and timid by past occurrences. None had advice to give, none a bold plan of his own to expound. He summoned all the Beks and Braves and exhorted them to be brave with the following words .

"Better than life with a bad name, is death with a good one."

"Well it is with me, if I die with good name."

"A good name must I have since the body is death."

"God, the Most High, has allowed to us such happiness and has created for us good fortune that we die as martyrs, we kill as avengers of his cause.

Therefore must each of you take oath upon his holy word that he will not think of turning his face from his foe, or withdraw from the deadly encounter, so long as life is not rent from his body "

When he had exhorted his people with the above words, all the Beggars and Braves made promise on the Holy Koran that they would not be disheartened in the prosecution of the holy war. "The plan was perfect, it worked admirably, for those near and afar, for seers and hearers, for friends and foes."

News came to Babar of the desertion of the Hindustani chiefs in several places, but he gave attention to none of them. He went on strengthening his defences as against the immediate foe, the Rana Sangha of Mewar. In battle array he left Sikri and arrived at the battle place on the 17th of March, 1527, and entrenched himself there securely.

There is a break in his memoirs and Babar refers to the letter of victory written by Shaik Zahan for an account of the battle of Kanwa. This letter has been translated by Mrs. A. S. Beveridge along with *Babar's Memoirs*

Babar stationed his army near the village of Kanwa. The centre was under his command. On his right were Chin Taimur Sultan, Kwaja Kamal-ud-din and others. On his left were Sultan Aliauddin

Alam Khan, son of Sultan Bahlol Lodi, Nizamuddin, Tardi Beg and others. The right wing was under the command of Humayun and the left was under Sayyid Mahdi Kwaja and Abdul Aziz Ali Targay and others. The flanks to form the famous move "Tulghama" were under more trusted officers, Tardita and Malick Quasim on the right and Mumin Ataka and Rustum Turkman on the left.

"The battle began about half past nine in the morning by a desperate charge made by the Rajputs on Babar's right. Bodies of the reserve were pushed out to its assistance and Mustafa Rume, who commanded one portion of the artillery and matchlock in the right of the centre, opened a fire on the assailants. Still new bodies of the enemy poured on undauntedly and new detachments from the reserve were sent to resist them. The battle was no less desperate on the left, to which also it was found necessary to despatch repeatedly parties from the reserve. When the battle lasted for several hours, and still continued to rage, Babar sent orders to the flanking columns to wheel round and charge, and he soon after ordered the guns to advance, and by a simultaneous movement, the household troops and cavalry stationed behind the cannon were ordered to gallop out on the right and left of the matchlock men in the centre, who also moved

forward and continued their fire, hastening to fling themselves with all their fury to the enemy's centre. When this was observed in the wings, they also advanced. These unexpected movements made at the same moment threw the enemy into confusion. Their centre was shaken, the men who were displaced by the attack made in flank, on the wings and rear, were forced upon the centre and crowded together. Still the gallant troops were not appalled. They made repeated and desperate attacks on the emperor's centre in the hope of recovering the day; but were bravely and steadily received and swept away in great numbers. Towards evening the confusion was complete and the slaughter was consequently dreadful. The fate of the battle was decided. Nothing remained for the Rajputs but to force their way through the bodies of the enemy that were now in their rear and to effect a retreat" (Erskine).

Babar writes

'For the love of the Faith, I became a wanderer in the desert.

I became the antagonist of the Pagans and Hindus.

I strove to make myself a martyr

Thanks to the Almighty God, who has made me a Ghazi "

The importance of the battle can hardly be over-rated. A deathblow was given to the Rajput power in Northern India and it never more rose to that pre-eminence to make itself the master of Delhi and hold the sway over the whole of Northern India. It set Babar firmly on the throne. As Rushbrook Williams writes, "Babar had definitely seated himself upon the throne of Sultan Ibrahim and the Sign and Seal of his achievement had been the annihilation of the Sultan's most formidable antagonists. Hitherto the occupation of Hindustan might have been looked upon as an episode in Babar's career of adventure, but from henceforth it became the keynote of his activities for the remainder of his life. It is significant of the new stage in his life which this battle marks that never afterwards does he have to take his throne and life upon the issue of a stricken field. Fighting there is, and fighting in plenty, to be done, but fighting for the extension of his power, for the reduction of the rebels, for the ordering of his kingdoms. It never is fighting for the throne."

10

THE BATTLE OF TALIKOTA

OR

The Downfall of Vijayanagar

OR

Muslim Expansion into Southern India

The battle of Talikota or more appropriately Rakshas-Tangidi is one of the very many decisive battles of India, and marks the beginning of the downfall of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagara and the expansion of the Muhammadan power into Southern India

Talikota is a town in the present Muddebehal Taluk of Bijapur district in the Bombay Presidency and is situated 16° 23' N and 75° 19' E on Don 16 miles above its junction with the Krishna. It is a town with a small fortress. Though it has given its name to the battle, in truth, the battle was not fought here at all. It was only a halting place of

the confederate army and as the armies had pitched up their camp here the battle has been named after the town, Talikota. It was near the two villages Rakshas and Tangidi, some 20 miles south of the town of Talikota and on the right bank of the river Krishna that the battle, in which the Muhammadan Sultans of the Deccan defeated Rama Raya of Vijayanagar, took place on 23rd January, 1565.

Many and diverse are the sources for the construction of our account of this battle and the historian has to wade with caution into the river of the chronicles written by the historians and writers of the time. But for the authentic writings of foreign travellers it would have been an arduous task to sift the truth out of the exaggerated accounts of both Muslim and Hindu writers. Tarikh-i-Ferishta and Burhan-i-Masir are the two best Muslim authorities on the subject. Apart from the Hindu literary sources, we have epigraphical records giving information of the battle. So far as the Hindu literary sources are concerned, the reader is referred to the Madras University publication—*Sources of Vijayanagar History* by Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar. Foreign travellers like Cauto, Faria Sousa and others have written a hearsay account of the battle, more accurately than the biased opinions of the local historians and writers.

The circumstances that led to the battle can best be understood by a study of the political intrigues of the time carried on by Rama Raya of Vijayanagar. Aliya Rama Raya, famous in history as Rama Raya of Vijayanagar, was, according to the anonymous chroniclers of Golkonda, cited by Ferishta, a subordinate of Kutb Shah of Golkonda. Later, Rama Raya left Golkonda to seek service under the Vijayanagar Ruler, who not only took him into his service but also promoted him to the highest rank. Rama Raya, made himself prominent, and married Tirumalamba, daughter of Krishna Deva Raya, the Ruler of Vijayanagar, and from that time onwards he was referred to as Aliya, which word in Kanarese meant son-in-law. Krishna Deva Raya died in 1529 and was succeeded by his half brother Achyuta Raya who in turn was succeeded by a minor son Venkata I. Salakama Timma, the treasurer of Achyuta Deva Raya, became the regent and putting the lawful king to the sword became the emperor himself. Rama Raya now stepped in and taking the cause of Sadasiva Raya and supported by the Dowager queens of Krishnadeva Raya installed Sadasiva on the throne of Vijayanagar and himself became the Regent. It was as regent, he played his part in the history of Vijayanagar, though at a later time, he is said to have assumed all the royal

insignia and still later he seems to have had himself installed on the throne with all the royal ceremonies. Sadasiva Raya was only emperor in name and he was virtually in prison all his life. He was allowed to be seen by the people once a year, when he gave darshan in full regal splendour to the assembled near the palace.

Rama Raya, an astute diplomat, fully recognised the truth of the Roman maxim "Divide et Impera" and followed it most successfully in all his dealings with his neighbouring Sultans. These were the Sultans of Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golkonda, Berar and Bidar. It must be remembered that, on several occasions, the Sultans united with one another with the idea of curbing the power of Vijayanagar under Rama Raya, but in all their undertakings they failed because of the Machiavellian policy pursued by Rama Raya.

At one time when Ahmednagar and Bijapur had allied themselves, Rama Raya to bring about a rift between the two successfully marched in three divisions against Ahmednagar and having captured the Sultan, Burhan Nizam Shah, compelled him to repudiate the alliance with Bijapur.

On another occasion, Rama Raya promising his aid induced Ahmednagar to join Golkonda and march against the Bijapuri fortress of Gulbarga, and

subsequently concluding a peace with Bijapur, withdrew his support to the allies with the consequence the Sultan of Ahmednagar was woefully defeated by the Bijapur General, Asad Khan.

When Ibrahim, the younger brother of the Kutb Shah of Golkonda, sought his protection, Rama Raya not only gave an asylum to the fugitive prince but subsequently on the death of Jamshed Quli Kutb Shah aided Ibrahim to become the Sultan of Golkonda. Later when Hussain Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar met Ibrahim Kutb Shah in the neighbourhood of Kalyan and celebrated the marriage between Hussain Nizam Shah's daughter Bibi Jamalli with Ibrahim Kutb Shah and thereafter attacked Kalyan, Rama Raya, sought by Adil Shah of Bijapur, sent an army under his brother Venkatadri against Golkonda territory and successfully decoyed Ibrahim Kutb Shah from the fort of Kalyan and then forced Hussain Nizam Shah to come to terms. It was stipulated by Rama Raya that the Nizam was to receive pan from his hands as a token of superiority of the donor. It is this humiliation of Nizam that was responsible for the dislike evinced by the Sultans for Rama Raya.

The arrogance of Rama Raya was mainly responsible for the formation of the "League of the Faithful" which eventually destroyed the great

southern Hindu empire of Vijayanagar and its capital city Bijanagar, now commonly referred to as the ruins of Hampi in the Bellary district.

The Muhammadan Sultans disliked Rama Raya, not only for his frequent interference in the internal affairs of the Muhammadan States but also for the arrogance displayed by Rama Raya against his Muhammadan allies in the campaigns against Ahmednagar.

The idea of an allied attack on Vijayanagar originated from the Sultan of Bijapur, who though very much beholden to his Vijayanagar ally, yet had a dislike to the person of Rama Raya and his arrogance. Primarily the idea to form an alliance was chiefly for curbing the insolence of Rama Raya for the disrespect shown by him to the Muhammadan Sultans and not as an expediency to check the power of Vijayanagar or to keep the balance of power between the Hindus and the Muhammadans. Prompted by Kishawar Khearty and Abou Turab Shirazy, Adil Shah mooted the idea of a "League of the Faithful" with the Golkonda Sultan, who readily fell in with the idea and even agreed to bring about a reconciliation between Ali Adil Shah and Hussain Nizam Shah. The Golkonda Sultan sent Mustafa Khan to the court of Hussain Nizam Shah to attempt at bringing about a reconciliation.

Mustafa Khan reminded the Nizam "that during the time of the Bhamini princes, the whole strength of the Mussalman powers was united under one King which maintained the balance against the force of the Raya of Bijanagar, that now, though the Mussalman power was divided, yet the policy required that all the princes of the Faithful should unite in restraining the increasing power of their common enemy. He observed that the common authority of Raya of Bijanagar, who had reduced all the Rayas of Carnatic to his yoke, required to be checked; and that, if his influence should be removed from the countries of Islam in order that the people of their several dominions, who should be considered as being committed by the Almighty to their care, might repose in safety from the oppressions of unbelievers, and their mosques and holy places, no longer be subject to the pollution from infidels." (*Ferishta*—III, p. 123-24) Nizam Shah then agreed to be reconciled to Ali Adil Shah and offered his daughter, Chand Bibi, in marriage to Ali Adil Shah, and with her the fort of Sholapur as dowry. In return Ali Adil Shah agreed to give his sister Fatah Bibi Hidayat Sultana, to Nizam Shah's eldest son, Prince Shahzada Murtuza.

The marriages were celebrated with great pomp and the festivities marked the beginning of the

League for the destruction of Rama Raya. The three Sultans formed the League and subsequently All Barid Shah seems to have joined the League, while the Sultan of Berar kept himself aloof.

In the meanwhile, "Ali Adil Shah, preparatory to the war and to afford himself a pretence for breaking with his ally, despatched an ambassador to Rama Raya, demanding restitution of some districts that had been wrested from him." As was expected, Rama Raya insulted the ambassador and expelled him from his court. This gave the Bijapur Sultan a handle and he immediately called upon the other Sultans to help him to crush the common enemy of the Islamic Faith.

All the Sultans with their armies met in the plains of Bijapur and marching southwards encamped at Talikota, where the armies rested for nearly ten days and spent the time in merriment and festivities, entertained by the Bijapur Sultan. The Portuguese authors record that the allied army contained "50,000 horse and 3,000 foot" (*Heras*). Some Mahratta detachments too joined the allied armies.

Rama Raya heard of the alliance and its objects and lost no time in making preparations to oppose the united forces. It is recorded that he had the City walls strengthened against any siege. According

to *Ferishta*, the Hindu army consisted of 70,000 horse, 90,000 infantry, while the anonymous chronicler of Golkonda states the Hindu army to have consisted of 100,000 horse and 300,000 foot. The Vijayanagar army was composed of men from various provinces. Muhammadan chiefs too abounded in the Vijayanagar army. A portion of the Vijayanagar army was under the command of two Muhammadan captains, who later became 'famous' in history as having contributed to the downfall of Rama Raya and Hindu Vijayanagar, by their treacherous action in the battle of Talikota.

The Muhammadan armies having passed the town of Talikota, which wrongly gave the name to the battle, laid waste the Vijayanagar territory to the north of the Krishna river. Rama Raya sent his brother, Tirumal Raya, called Yellumrata by *Ferishta*, with 20,000 cavalry and 500 elephants and 10,000 foot to occupy and defend the right bank of the Krishna and the passages and to prevent the crossing of the river by the allied army. He next sent his brother, Venkatadri, with another contingent to reinforce Tirumala and his army.

Meanwhile, the Muhammadans sent scouts to locate the movements of the Hindu army. "The allies had perhaps halted too long. At any rate, their scouts returned to their sovereigns, with the news

that all the passages were defended and that their only course was to force the ford immediately in their front. This was in possession of the Hindus who had fortified the bank on the south side and had thrown up earth works and had stationed a number of cannons to dispute the crossing" (*Sewell*).

"On obtaining this information, the allies held a council of war, when it was determined that they should march to another part of the river as if with the intention of crossing it, in hopes that the enemy might be induced to quit his position and follow, thus enabling the Muhammadans to return suddenly and throw part of the army across at the desired ford without interruption. Agreeable to this plan, the army of Islam marched on the next morning and continued to move for three days successively; which completely deceived the enemy who quitted all his posts and manoeuvred along the opposite side of the river. The allies on the third night suddenly struck their camp and moved with such rapidity, that during the next day they gained the ford, which the enemy had deserted and crossed the river without any opposition". (*Ferishta*). The place and the ford where the Mussalmans crossed the river was Ingalgi on the left bank of the river Krishna. This crossing of the river, enabled

the allied army to move southwards to attack the main army of Vijayanagar under Rama Raya, which was then marching leisurely to give aid to Triumale and Venkatadri if necessary.

Heras in his book on the Aravidu Dynasty cites the following account of a description of Rama Raya's touching farewell to his queens before leaving the City. Rama Raya "then went to his own harem, spent sometimes with Sathyabama Bai, the chief queen, and presented many rich jewels to her. Then he went to another of his wives, whose name was Deva Chintamani Trivegai. Her company gave him great pleasure and he made presents to her. Then he came to the drawing room of his third wife, Mana Mohini Nijaswarupi. She tried to please him in many ways. Then he visited the chamber of his mother, Chandrasala. She waved many jewels round his head that evils may be warded off. He then explained to her the state of affairs, how four kings had made common cause in attacking him and how the temples, a/lms-distributing houses, and the existence of Brahmans were threatened. He, therefore intimated to her the plan of repulsing and punishing the enemy. He then fell at her feet and asked for her leave. She did not like the idea and said. "We have not hurt the Muhammadans, but even then they are all coming united. It would be

better to negotiate with them" He not approving of her advice, went away whereupon she consented to please him. Afterwards he took rest during the night in his chambers" (Heras—*footnotes*—p. 201.) He left the City next day to reinforce his brothers, if necessary

Rama Raya had expected his brothers to cope with the allied army without his aid and hence it was that he moved out of the City, which he had strengthened some time back. So when he heard of the passage of the allied army "Rama Raya, though surprised, was not alarmed and took all possible means for defence". His brothers, though outwitted by the allied armies, hastened back and successfully effected a junction with Rama Raya and his enemy.

Rama Raya then "despatched to the vanguards a body of Rachbidas (of the Rachvedu Race) under a captain of their own to reconnoitre the surroundings. According to Mahratta accounts, there was a fierce exchange of arrows from both sides and both parties suffered heavily, but the Muhammadan vanguard was forced to retreat. Rama Raya was having dinner, when news suddenly came that the enemy was approaching and was almost within sight' and that between the vanguards of both armies an engagement had taken place. The Hindu

chief, "though somewhat astonished at their (allies') activity", remarks *Ferishta*, "was by no means dismayed", but mounting a horse with juvenile agility, he put his troops in battle array. He entrusted his right wing to his brother, Tirumala, and his left wing to his younger brother, Venkatadri, while he himself commanded the centre. Two thousand elephants trained and armed, and one thousand pieces of ordnance were placed at different intervals of his lines."

"The allies likewise drew up the army in order of battle. Ali Adil Shah took over the command of the right wing to oppose Venkatadri, the left was entrusted to Ibrahim Qutb Shah and Ali Barid Shah, in front of Tirumala's wing while the centre was led by Hussain Nizam Shah. Each of these divisions erected twelve standards in honour of the 12 Imams, before proceeding to the attack. Akas Khan, an officer of Ahmednagar, was posted with a force of mounted Khorasani archers in advance of the centre. The gun carriages fastened together by strong chains and ropes were drawn up in front of the line of Hussain Nizam Shah, there were altogether six hundred pieces of ordnance of different calibre, placed in three lines of two hundred each. In the first line were the heavy guns, the smaller were in the second while the third line consisted of

swivels, the whole was commanded by Chalabi Rumi Khan, a distinguished officer of Asia Minor, who had served in Europe. The elephants were placed at intervals in the main line of the battle, their tusks being armed with sharp sword-blades". (*Ferishta*— II.)

"It was noon when the two armies advanced and joined battle. The left wing of the Hindu army under the command of Venkatadri was the first to attack its opponent, the Sultan of Bijapur. Venkatadri had always been a helpmate to his brother Rama Raya on the battle-field, "verily as Lakshmana was to the Epic Hero, Rama" as the grant of Venkata III says. This great general was the first to attack the Mussalman force. "The infidels", *Ferishta* remarks, "begin the attack with vast flight of rockets and rapid discharges of artillery." Venkatadri had under his command two hundred thousand infantry, twenty-five thousand cavalry and five hundred elephants, and with this force, he fought valiantly inflicting great loss on his enemies" (*The Aravidu Dynasty* by Heras— p. 205-206).

Tirumala was on the right wing opposing the combined armies of Golkonda and Bidar. Tirumala with his son's help successfully beat back Ibrahim Shah, but was seriously injured in the conflict and was forced to retire from the field. When this news

of injury to Tirumala reached the ears of Rama Raya, he calling his Rachavedu followers, fell upon the Muslims and broke their order. Routing both the right and left wings of the allied army, Rama Raya attacked the Muslim Centre commanded by the Sultan of Ahmednagar. The attack was so unexpected that the Sultan had to retreat nearly half a league sustaining a loss of nearly 2,000 men. The fight was not over, Rama Raya was again charged by Adil Shah's troops and the Sultan of Ahmednagar, rallying his forces, reinforced the Bijapur attack. Great was the havoc caused by the Nizam Shah's artillery under Iklas Khan and Rumi Khan on the Hindu army.

"At this phase of the fight Hussain Nizam Shah ordered the camp followers to set up his pavilion in the front of the enemy. The pavilion was the King's great tent of State, and it was the custom of the Sultans of the Deccan whenever they ordered this pavilion to be set up in the field of battle, to stand their ground without quitting their saddle, until the victory was declared for them" (*Burhan-i-Masir*). Rama Raya had a throne similarly set up and seating himself thereon, caused presents to be distributed among his army followers. This act of generosity on the part of Rama Raya inspired the Hindu army to make a sudden attack on the Muslim right and left

wing and rout them. *Ferishta* remarks that the allies were thrown into temporary disorder and Ibrahim Kutb Shah and Adil Shah were despairing of success. The author of *Burhan-i-Masir* writes, "the defeat of the Muslims appeared inevitable", and is corroborated by *Fariay Sousa*, who writes that "Rama Raya almost defeated his enemies". The Muslims slain were piled in heaps over heaps and autumn seemed to have come over the Muslim army. The infidels showed their superiority and valour" (*Basatin-us-Salat* is cited in the *Aravindu Dynasty*).

The Centre of the Muslim army under Sultan Nizam Shah, however, stood its ground and caused havoc to the Hindu army by its deadly artillery attack. This effective artillery attack caused great confusion in the Hindu army. Kishawar Khan Lary, a Bijapuri officer holding command in the Muslim Centre, seizing the opportunity attacked and drove the Hindu Centre backwards.

"And then at the height of all confusion there was a movement in the Hindu army that decided the fate of the day. The Muhammadan generals who served under Rama Raya taking advantage of the confusion caused by the last charge of Kishawar Khan Lary, turned their backs on their lord and went over with their troops to the cause of Islam. Their treason recorded neither by *Ferishta* nor by *Ali ibn*

Aziz, explains quite satisfactorily the sudden change of fortune at the end of the battle. We are made aware of it by C. Fredrick, who heard of the account of the whole action, one year later, when he passed through Vijayanagar" (*Heras*). "These four Kings" says he, "were not able to overcome this City and the King of Bezeneger, but by treason. This King of Bezeneger was a gentile and had amongst all others of his captains, two of which were notable and they were Moores (Muhammadans) and these two captains had either of them in charge three score and ten or four score thousand men. These captains being of one religion with the four kings, which were Moores (Muhammadans) wrought means with them to destroy and betray their own king into their hands. The King of Bezeneger esteemed not the force of the four kings, his enemies, but went out of his City to wage battle with them in the fields, and when the armies were joined, the battle lasted but a while, not the space of four hours, because the two traitorous captains in the chiefest of the fights, with their company turned their faces against their king and made disorder in his armies, that as astonished, they set themselves to flight". (*Purchas* X, p. 92-3) *Anquetil Du Perron* likewise records "the king abandoned during the battle by two Muhammadan chiefs perished". (*Heras*—p. 212).

Heras suggests that one of the Muhammadan chiefs who had deserted might be Amin-ul-Mulk, whom Rama Raya used to call 'his brother' as per the account of the anonymous chronicler quoted by *Ferishta*. The Hindu army dismayed at the sudden desertion of the Muhammadan captains took to flight and Rama Raya being injured caused himself to be taken in a litter to his tent. But before he was taken to the tent he was taken prisoner and conducted before Hussain Nizam Shah. *Cauto* says that Hussain Nizam Shah beheaded Rama Raya with his own hands. Thus was victory gained by the Muhammadans. Thus ended the great Hindu leader.

"This was not a defeat merely but a cataclysm", writes *Sewell*. "The battle of Rakshas-Tagdi is the milestone that separates the era of the Hindu splendour in the south of India from the age of Muhammadan expansion. Impartial history acknowledges its influence centuries after, since it paved the way for the Maratha cavalry of Sivaji and his successors, fostered the ambitious deal of Aurungazeb and his nabobs and attracted the ambitions of Haider Ali to overthrow the ancient Hindu Dynasty of Mysore. The glorious empire of Vijayanagar, faithful trustee of the Hoysalas for two centuries and a half, was now seriously menaced

by its secular opponents, the Muslim powers of Central India".

"Vijayanagara never wholly recovered from that tremendous blow, the foundations of this marvellous empire which was the wonder of both the merchants and travellers, were deeply shaken and its star never rose again to the zenith of its sky". (*Heras* - p. 217-19.)

It must however be remembered that the Hindu prowess that succeeded in almost annihilating the Muhammadan right and left wing is unquestionable. According to the writer of *Burhani-Masir* "the defeat of the Mussalmans appeared inevitable". *Fariya Sousa* quoted by *Heras* says, Rama Raya almost defeated his enemies". *Cesare Fredrick* says, "The King of Bezeneger esteemed not the force of the four kings, his enemies, but went out of the City to wage battle with them in the field, and when the armies were joined the battle lasted but a while, not the space of four hours because, the two traitorous captains in the chiefest of the fights turned their faces against their king" (*Purchas* - x—p. 93.) It was only after the desertion of the two treacherous Muhammadan captains that Rama Raya attempted "to make an escape on foot" most likely to gain shelter and review the situation. As ill-luck would have it,

even before he had time to take stock of the changed situation of his army consequent upon the Muhammadan desertion he was captured and taken before "Hussain Nizam Shah, who beheaded the venerable prisoner with his own hands".

Secondly, it has been presumed by many writers that the battle of Talikota resulted in the break up of the empire into petty principalities with no one central authority controlling them. This is not borne out by facts. Epigraphical records clearly show that the empire was left intact and without any break up whatsoever in its power. The fact that Tirumala immediately after the departure of the Sultans from Vijayanagar turned up to repopulate the city, clearly shows that all was not lost and that there was real unity in the country and the power of the emperor still supreme. The anonymous author of the life of St. Xavier quoted by *Heras* says, "Nevertheless the king of this country was not so much knocked down for he is still very rich and powerful ; and he possesses a large State, quite a good number of elephants and great cavalry and infantry."

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